

Make your Mark:

Learning to Advocate for Meaningful Policy Change

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Agenda

- *Making a difference at a system level*
- *How does policy change? The legislative process and your voice*
- *Our current advocacy campaign: Youth Ombudsman Office*
- *Next steps: How you can get involved*



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Making an impact at different levels

Direct Service

Direct Service: Provides people in need with goods or services

Systems Change

Systems Change: Addresses the root cause through policy change

Framework Change

Framework Change: Influence mindsets at a large scale





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Framework Change

Not: "Youth in foster care tend to misbehave and get the treatment they deserve"

- They do not deserve harsh, punitive or abusive treatment
- They deserve to be protected not blamed for their situation

Not: "Young people don't know what is best for them"

- Youth should be empowered and listened to
- Their voice is a powerful agent of change
- Allies amplify the voice of youth to create change

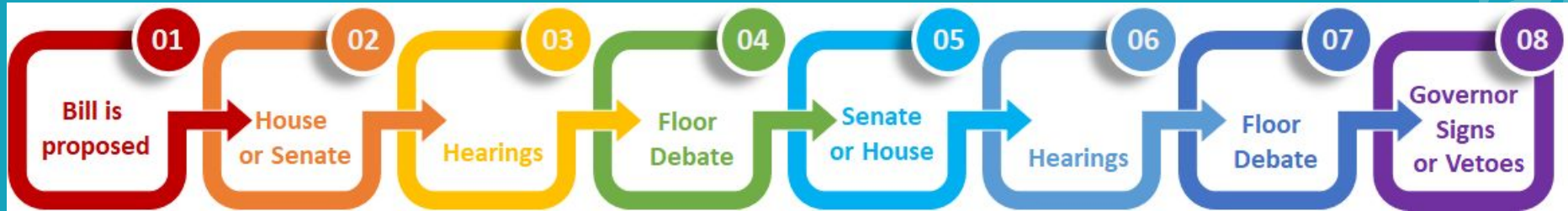
Not: "There are no easy solutions, this is just the way it is."

- Creating better mechanisms for youth to report abuse will create lasting change



Systems Change

- Identify a policy priority, develop a coalition, identify stakeholders
- Meet with legislators to identify a champion
- Draft a bill or an amendment to a current bill with your champion
- Track the progress on the legislative journey
- Grassroots advocacy along the way



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Grassroots Advocacy

Amplify the voice
of those most
impacted

Include your name and title
to demonstrate your
standing in the community
and that you are an ally

Call or send a letter/email
Good: use a template
Better: own words
Best: own handwriting
Amazing: Testify

Engage the press: press
release, letter to the editor
of your local paper or an
Op-Ed

Use graphics, images,
data, and stories on social
media

Share with people in your
sphere of influence

Target your own
legislators

Locate the address of an
individual rather than
general email addresses

Coordinate with others: In
person Day of Action;
online Twitter Storm



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Creating a Youth Ombudsman Office and Bill of Rights will protect children and teens by empowering them to self-report abuse and rights violations and have an independent investigation in situations when the system is broken.



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Key Components of a Robust and Youth-centered Ombudsman Office

The U.S. Ombudsman Association has defined independence as an essential characteristic to avoid conflicts of interest

1

Independent and autonomous

Separate from any office serving foster caregivers or professionals to avoid conflicts and focus on youth-specific practices

2

Dedicated to youth

Those with lived experiences should be involved with the implementation at every stage to ensure practices will be effective.

3

Designed by current and former foster youth



Current Progress

Executive Budget

We applaud Governor DeWine's commitment of \$1 million to create an ombudsman office and establish a Foster Youth Bill of Rights

Senate Amendments

Include appropriation outside JFS Program Operations (SC3398)
Create an autonomous commission to oversee a *Youth Ombudsman Office* and establish the bill of rights (SC3167)



Next Steps

- Amendments to HB110 will be decided by the Senate Finance Committee
- June 2 (one week from today) all amendments must be approved
- Call, write, email, tag in social media the members of the Senate Finance Committee
- Templates, graphics and contact information provided in our toolkit



Questions

