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
Making an impact at different levels

**Direct Service:** Provides people in need with goods or services

**Systems Change:** Addresses the root cause through policy change

**Framework Change:** Influence mindsets at a large scale
ADVOCATING & SERVING OUR FOSTER CARE COMMUNITY

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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
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
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.
Key Components of a Robust and Youth-centered Ombudsman Office

1. **Independent and autonomous**
   - The U.S. Ombudsman Association has defined independence as an essential characteristic to avoid conflicts of interest.
   - 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**
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