

## HB 2106 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Human Services

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**Sub-Referral To:** Joint Committee On Ways and Means

**Meeting Dates:** 2/8, 3/10

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#### **WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Renames both the Office and the position of Children’s Advocate to the Office of the Human Services Ombuds and Ombudsperson, respectively. Expands toll-free telephonic information and referral service provided to include all Department of Human Services (DHS) programs involving eligibility for public assistance, children, elderly persons, and vulnerable adults. Allows the public to *request*, rather than *access*, specified information. Adds to existing qualifications that are required to be appointed Ombudsperson and requires just cause for termination. Refines and expands scope of duties with respect to investigations of suspected abuse to include elderly persons and vulnerable adults as well as children. Prohibits disclosure of records received from outside entities unless specifically permitted by law.

#### **ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

Broadening the scope of GAO to oversee all DHS clients.

Alignment with other ombuds offices.

#### **EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The current Office of Children’s Advocate maintains a toll-free phone line for the public to access information, express concerns, and complain about matters relating to suspected child abuse. The Governor’s Advocacy Office (GAO) currently acts as an ombuds office to assist Oregonians with concerns about programs administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS). The GAO reports having to manage an increasing variety of concerns relating to DHS programs.

House Bill 2106 renames the Office of Children’s Advocate to the Office of the Human Services Ombuds (Office) and the position of Children’s Advocate to Human Services Ombudsperson, and combines their functions. The measure allows Oregonians to request information, express concerns, and complain about public assistance programs generally, and matters relating to suspected abuse of elderly persons, vulnerable adults, and children. Finally, the measure adds to specific background and experience requirements that are necessary for appointment to the position of Human Services Ombudsperson and requires just cause for termination.