AGN. NO. _____

October 6, 2026

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH

AND JANICE HAHN

Providing Advocacy and Problem-Solving Support for All Youth in Foster Care in Los Angeles County

In October of 1998, in response to issues with youth having their rights upheld and basic needs met while in group home care, the Board of Supervisors established the Children's Group Home Ombudsman at the recommendation of the Civil Grand Jury and Commission for Children and Families. The Children's Group Home Ombudsman was created within the Department of the Auditor-Controller (A-C) to ensure youth placed in County contracted Group Homes had access to an independent, objective, and proactive advocate to help them solve problems and address concerns that otherwise would be unresolved or unnoticed. Additionally, the Children's Group Home Ombudsman was charged with tracking and reporting trends found across reported problems. At the time that the office was established, AB12/Extended Foster Care and its associated placement options did not exist.

Now known as the Ombudsperson for Youth in Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) (Ombuds), this Office serves as an essential resource to youth in congregate care, receiving and responding to requests for assistance, serving as an

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independent advocate to help youth navigate the dependency system, as well as helping young people resolve problems and exercise their rights under the Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBOR). The Ombuds produces a semi-annual report detailing their outreach, requests for assistance, and observations about how to improve processes and outcomes for system-involved youth.

While the Board recently directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to fund the two non-budgeted Children Services Administrator II (CSA II) items already included in the ordinance for the Auditor- Controller to allow the Ombuds to extend their advocacy, problem solving, and outreach to youth placed in Transitional Housing Placements, like Transitional Housing Placement Program for Non-Minor Dependent (THPP-NMD), the vast majority of children and youth in the dependency system do not have a local, independent Ombuds serving and conducting outreach to them. This creates disparities in access to advocacy and support and complicates lines of communication for youth who need help. All young people in our care, not just those in STRTPS or in transitional housing placements, deserve this level of support.

Professional standards for ombudsperson offices promulgated by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) require that ombuds must be independent to be effective. Currently, only the Ombudsperson for Youth in STRTPs meets this professional standard requirement, since other ombuds functions that support young people– to the extent they exist– are housed within the same department as the clients to whom they are supposed to provide independent advocacy and support, and under the same chain of command as staff who might be the subject of youth requests for assistance. This not only impairs effectiveness; it prevents true independence and a sense of safety for young people in moments of real vulnerability and need.

It is critical that children and youth across the Los Angeles County dependency system have equitable access to an independent problem solver and advocate, and that the County make the process of requesting assistance for youth in vulnerable settings as streamlined and easily accessible as possible. The current system is a fragmented system of advocacy, complicating matters and confusing the young people it is intended to serve. The County must do everything possible to reduce burdens by streamlining ombuds functions for youth in all parts of the dependency system and explore the feasibility of doing so under a single organization.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1) Direct the Interim Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in collaboration with the Auditor-Controller (A-C) and the Ombudsperson for Youth in Short Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs), to report back to the Board in 60 days, in writing on the following:

    a. An assessment of the scope and responsibilities of existing entities that address individual advocacy needs and/or grievances, as well as systems improvement, for children and youth across the dependency system continuum of care. The assessment should include, at minimum, the scope and responsibilities of the DCFS youth ombuds functions, A-C Ombuds Office, System of Care and the TAY Table, Office of Child, Youth, and Family Wellbeing, CDSS's Foster Care Ombudsperson, Children's Law Center, and CASA of Los Angeles;

    b. An explanation of the Ombuds-like requests DCFS currently tracks, how that information is tracked, and an analysis of the resources and time it

would take for DCFS to track their Ombuds information in a way that is comparable to how the A-C does their tracking; and

c. A review of other jurisdictions that have state and/or local foster care ombudspersons that includes details on the forms and functions of these offices and the means by which child welfare information and data is shared between the ombuds office and the child welfare agency.

2) Direct County Counsel to submit an analysis to the Board, in writing, in 60 days, regarding the confidentiality of juvenile case records as applied to information sharing between DCFS and the A-C Ombuds Office and/or direct access of DCFS systems and databases by the A-C Ombuds Office. This analysis should also include guidance on any next steps required to allow for data sharing between DCFS and the A-C Ombuds Office.

3) Direct the Auditor-Controller, in collaboration with DCFS, to report back to the Board, in writing, in 90 days, based on the report submitted in response to Directive 1, with:

a. An update on the progress of the transfer and implementation of youth ombuds functions pertaining to THPP-NMD and similar settings to the A-C Ombuds office;

b. Recommendations for a phased, multi-year approach to better integrate the work of the A-C Ombuds office with the work of existing entities that address individual advocacy needs and/or grievances for children and youth across the dependency system continuum. The recommendations should address whether the work of any existing entities may be

consolidated within the A-C Ombuds office so that there are independent ombuds functions for children and youth across the dependency system continuum, uplift opportunities for the A-C Ombuds office to collaborate with existing entities, and/or explore the need for an expanded scope of work for the A-C Ombuds office. The recommendations should also include funding and staffing requests should additional needs be identified;

c. Tailored outreach strategies to distinguish and publicize the points of access for ombuds services; and

d. Continued semi-annual written reports to the Board, public, and other stakeholders on the activities of the A-C Ombuds Office.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Auditor-Controller to:

4) Execute agreements for the provision of Master of Social Work field placement internship program services and training in basic social work practice under the direct supervision of an agency Field Instructor, with no funding required for these agreements; and

5) Approve the extension of these and other local university affiliation/placement agreements for internship placement and training as they expire, following the appropriate review: University of California, Los Angeles and California State University, Dominguez Hills.

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