PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Correspondence Received

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Agenda #	**Relate To**	**Position**	**Name**	**Comments**
17.		**Favor**	Jane A	
			Jodi Kurata	
			Jordan E Steffen	Please see written comments.
			Josie Swoboda	
			Julie McCormick	
			Michelle Rosser	My name is Michelle Edith Rosser. I am not a lawyer. I am a mom. Fourteen years inside the Los Angeles County child welfare system taught me what a young person looks like when no one in the room answers to them. Every professional at the table reports up a chain. The youth needs an advocate whose only chain is to the youth. That is what advocacy means. I support this motion, and I ask the Board for three things: make the advocacy independent — not another department middleman; make problem-solving include the family that is fighting for that young person, not just the system around them; and put rights in writing, in plain language, handed to every young person, every time. If it is not on the record, it did not happen. Los Angeles County should know, and the record should show it acted.
			Veronica Galvez	Hello, I am writing my public comment in support of the expansion of the Ombudsperson's office to cover all youth in care. It's important for a neutral 3rd party to act as advocates and model advocacy for our clients. The existing Ombudsperson's office staff have worked within DCFS YDS/ILP and are especially suited locally to identify policy gaps and blind spots that exist within these systems and departments. I believe expanding the Ombudsperson's office to cover all youth in care will increase everyone's ability to safely support the young people who depend on these systems, creating a safer vessel to empower them to advocate for themselves.
		Oppose	Therese Mullaly	We have plenty of advocates for youth in foster care. We don't need to invest in yet another program.
		Item Total	**8**	
Grand Total			**8**	

As of: 10/7/2026 9:00:11 AM

United States Ombudsman Association

To: Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
500 West Temple Street
Room 383
Los Angeles, CA 90012

From: Jordan Steffen, President
United States Ombudsman Association

September 22, 2026

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am writing in support of the proposed motion: Providing Advocacy and Problem-Solving Support for All Youth in Foster Care in Los Angeles County.

The United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) is the oldest and largest professional association for public sector ombuds agencies and programs in the United States. For nearly 50 years, the USOA has established the tenant pillars of practice for ombuds working to serve those who rely on and utilize public systems and services. The four pillars of practice upheld by the USOA and its members are: Independence, Confidentiality, Neutrality and a Credible Review Process.

While no two members of USOA have identical authority, jurisdiction or placement in the public sector, they each strive to uphold these core principles in their work. When this practice is supported through thoughtful establishment and continued support, not only are these agencies and programs more effective in carrying out their mission, but those they serve benefit from unique utility that only an ombuds may provide. As President of USOA, it is my responsibility to ensure that such efforts receive not only recognition, but strong support.

In particular, I want to commend the efforts in this motion to study the placement and authority of the Ombudsperson for Youth in Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) to ensure it is best situated to serve youth in congregate care. The ability to operate with autonomy from the entities providing services, and to ensure the confidentiality of those ombuds is crucial in establishing and deepening the public trust of those ombuds serve. Such considerations are crucial in helping ombuds to serve independently and with the ability to consider the needs and experiences of people who contact them.

This also requires recognition of the motion's requirement to study effective methods for the agency to independently access information and systems necessary to carry out independent reviews. Independent – and unimpeded – access to information systems allow ombuds offices to fully review concerns and cases without interference and in more timely manners. Recently, ombuds offices who were not established with this authority have made similar motions to gain direct access to records. This trend is supported by a growing recognition that ombuds require this access to uphold the four pillars stated above.

Again, I want to commend the Board for bringing forward this motion and offer my full support in its passage. If members have questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Jordan Steffen

Jordan Steffen
President, Board of Directors
United States Ombudsman Association
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Phone: 970-531-9233

CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER OF CALIFORNIA
Written Comment in Support of Agenda Item #17
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors – October 6, 2026

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

Children's Law Center of California ("CLC") respectfully submits this statement in support of **Agenda Item 17**, authored by Supervisors Lindsey P. Horvath and Janice Hahn, *Providing Advocacy and Problem-Solving Support for All Youth in Foster Care in Los Angeles County*

CLC strongly supports this motion and urges the Board to move forward as quickly as feasible toward expanding access to the Auditor-Controller's Ombudsperson so that **all children and youth in Los Angeles County foster care—regardless of placement type—have access to an independent advocate and problem solver.**

The Auditor-Controller's Ombudsperson for Youth in Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) provides an important and distinct service to young people in congregate care. As the motion recognizes, the Ombuds responds directly to requests for assistance, serves as an independent advocate, helps youth navigate the dependency system and resolve problems, assists young people in exercising their rights under the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, and identifies systemic trends through its reporting.

CLC believes these services should not depend on where a young person happens to be placed. The need for an independent advocate does not end when a youth leaves an STRTP. Children and youth living with relatives, nonrelative extended family members, resource families, foster families, in transitional housing, or in other placement settings may encounter concerns involving their placement, services, education, health care, family and sibling relationships, personal rights, or interactions with the child welfare system.

Yet, as the motion acknowledges, the vast majority of children and youth in the dependency system currently do not have access to a local, independent Ombuds providing this type of assistance. The result is unequal access to advocacy based largely on placement type. CLC agrees with the fundamental premise of this motion: **all young people in foster care deserve this level of support.**

Expansion Should Move Forward as Soon as Feasible

CLC strongly encourages the Board to use the assessments and report-backs required by this motion as a roadmap for implementation—not as a reason to delay expansion.

The County has already established an independent Ombuds structure that serves young people in STRTPs. The question before the County should therefore be how to responsibly and sustainably expand that successful function across the continuum of foster care placements.

We urge the Board, Auditor-Controller, and DCFS to move forward with that expansion **as soon as operationally feasible**, including through a phased approach if necessary. The motion appropriately directs the Auditor-Controller and DCFS to develop recommendations for a phased, multi-year approach, identify necessary staffing and funding, and explore an expanded scope of work for the Ombuds Office. CLC encourages the County to approach that work with the goal of achieving equitable access to independent Ombuds services for all foster youth, rather than maintaining placement-based distinctions indefinitely.

The Ombudsperson and CLC Provide Distinct and Complementary Advocacy

As the County conducts the assessment required by the motion, it is also important to recognize that **CLC and the Ombudsperson perform fundamentally different and complementary functions.**

CLC provides court-appointed legal representation to children and youth in dependency proceedings. Our attorneys counsel clients regarding their legal rights and options, advocate for their expressed interests, appear on their behalf in court, and use the legal mechanisms available within dependency proceedings to protect and advance those interests.

The Ombudsperson serves a different and equally significant role. An Ombuds provides a readily accessible avenue for youth to raise day-to-day concerns, obtain assistance navigating systems, seek informal problem-solving support, and receive help exercising their rights. Importantly, an Ombuds can often intervene when a concern arises, without requiring a young person to wait until the issue can be addressed through the court process.

The Ombuds Office also performs a broader systemic function by identifying patterns across individual requests for assistance and elevating recurring issues and systemic patterns through outreach, data collection, and public reporting.

Youth need both.

Access to an attorney should never be viewed as a substitute for access to an independent Ombudsperson, just as an Ombudsperson cannot substitute for the individualized legal representation provided by dependency counsel. The existence of CLC and other advocates therefore should not be a reason to limit the scope of Ombuds services.

Instead, CLC encourages the County to strengthen coordination and referral pathways among these distinct advocacy resources while preserving their respective functions and independence. The goal should be a network of support in which young people know where they can turn, can reach the appropriate advocate quickly, and do not have to understand complicated County structures before they can get help.

Independence Is Essential

CLC particularly appreciates the motion's emphasis on the importance of independence. As the motion notes, an Ombuds function is most effective when it is independent from the agency or provider whose actions may be the subject of a young person's concern.

That independence is particularly important for foster youth. Young people must be able to raise concerns about their placement, services, caregivers, providers, or interactions with the child welfare system without fearing that seeking assistance will negatively affect their placement, services, or relationships with the adults responsible for their care and that their reporting will not lead to unfair treatment.

For that reason, as the County considers how existing advocacy and grievance functions should be coordinated, integrated, or potentially consolidated, CLC encourages the County to preserve the independence of the Auditor-Controller Ombuds Office and ensure that expanded Ombuds services remain structurally separate from DCFS.

Youth Must Know How to Access the Ombuds

CLC also strongly supports the motion's direction to develop tailored outreach strategies to distinguish and publicize points of access for Ombuds services. Expansion will be meaningful only if children and youth know the Ombuds exists, understand what assistance it can provide, and can contact the office easily and confidentially.

Outreach should be youth-centered, developmentally appropriate, accessible in multiple languages and formats, and repeated throughout a young person's time in foster care—not limited to placement entry or a single notification. CLC also encourages the County to meaningfully engage current and former foster youth in designing both the expanded Ombuds model and its outreach strategy.

Conclusion

CLC strongly supports this motion and encourages the Board to treat it as a key step toward a clear goal: **every child and youth in Los Angeles County foster care should have meaningful access to an independent Ombudsperson, regardless of where they are placed.**

We urge the County to move forward with that expansion as soon as feasible, to identify and commit the staffing and resources necessary to make countywide access sustainable, and, as an immediate step, to ensure that **DCFS permanently fund the two non-budgeted CSA II positions previously directed by the Board.**

Children and youth should not have different access to independent advocacy simply because one young person is placed in an STRTP while another is living with a relative, resource family, or in another foster care setting. Nor should the existence of court-appointed counsel be viewed as eliminating the need for an independent Ombuds. These are different forms of advocacy, and both are essential to a system that takes young people's voices, rights, and concerns seriously.

CLC appreciates the leadership of Supervisors Horvath and Hahn in bringing this issue forward and respectfully urges the Board to advance the motion and move expeditiously toward equitable access to independent Ombuds services for **all** children and youth in foster care.

Children's Law Center of California