



**Testimony from Ombudsperson Manuel B. Zuniga, Jr. –
Ombudsperson for Asian Pacific Families in support of SF 4204 -
Mitchell: Ombudspersons access to the social service information
system authorization**

“Our mission is to ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies.”

Greetings respected members of the Minnesota Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

I am Manuel Zuniga, Ombudsperson for Asian Pacific Families with Minnesota’s Office of Ombudsperson for Families.

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families was created in 1991 by the state legislature to provide a fair, neutral, and transparent environment between state and county agencies tasked with child protection and families of color in Minnesota.

Part of the role of an Ombudsperson is to identify systemic issues leading to the longstanding inequity and disproportionality observed within Minnesota’s child protection system.

On January 4, 2024, I provided testimony before the Legislative Task Force on Child Protection describing the vital need for multiple Ombudsperson offices to have direct access to the current Department of Human Services Social Service Information System (SSIS).

Direct access to SSIS will provide the collective Ombudspersons and the children and families we serve with the statutorily mandated transparency and checks and balances to actively work on eliminating these observed disparate outcomes for different communities in Minnesota. Direct access will remove unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles to obtaining information in real time for effective problem resolution.

I submit my statement to voice my office and Agency’s unreserved support for S.F. 4204 – Ombudspersons access to the social service information system authorization authored by Senators Mitchell and Hoffman.

