

March 7, 2024

Re: Support for SF 4204 (Mitchell), Ombudspersons access to the social service information system authorization

Dear Chair and Members,

As Ombudsperson for Corrections, I write to express my support of SF 4204. This bill provides that ombudsperson offices have express access to the data necessary to fulfill their statutory role.

Although this bill does not directly affect the work of our office, such language and access to data is typical of ombuds work including ours, and it is critical to being able to fulfill the statutory duty of ombuds work within the full scope of its authority. Ombudspersons must be able to receive and act on complaints, conduct investigations, review systemic concerns, work towards resolutions, and make recommendations regarding the activities of state and governmental entities, with transparency and accuracy. An ombuds only functions well if the office can access data without impediments or influence by those who hold the data.

Some of our state's most vulnerable persons rely on ombuds offices with jurisdiction over facilities licensed by Health and Human Services, and ombudspersons must be able to conduct independent investigations and provide client-centered assistance to them within the full scope of their authority.

In support of the important work of ombuds offices, I ask that you support SF 4204.

Sincerely,



Margaret Zadra
Ombudsperson for Corrections