



OFFICE OF RESPONDENT
PARENTS' COUNSEL

March 9, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC) in strong support of House Bill 25-1200: Modifications to Office of Child Protection Ombudsman Fact Sheet. The ORPC provides high-quality interdisciplinary legal representation for parents in crisis who have been separated from their children in dependency and neglect cases. Part of the ORPC's mission includes advocating for family-centered policies, holding the state to its burden, and promoting equity and transparency in the system through data collection and analysis.

The Child Protection Ombudsman is an important partner in ensuring that both county departments of human services and the Colorado Department of Human Services follow federal and state law and regulations. On at least four occasions over the last five years, the ORPC has initiated requests for systemic investigation by the CPO. The systemic concerns raised have included:

- Access to child welfare records by parents, which is guaranteed by both state and federal law;
- Widespread lack of training and knowledge about the requirement for county departments to identify and accommodate both parents and children with disabilities;
- Falsification of child welfare records; and
- Mismanagement and interference in casework decisions by the former Washington County DHS Director leading to lengthy delays in children returning home to their parents and extensive costs to taxpayers.

In some instances, the CPO was able to obtain the necessary records to further investigate. In other circumstances, the CPO took every measure available to them to obtain records but was unable to obtain the necessary records to complete their investigation. In all instances where the CPO has been able to conduct a systemic investigation, it resulted in greater transparency and in recommendations for improvement. HB 25-1200 would provide the CPO greater access to records and clarify its authority to conduct systemic investigations, furthering its impact and ensuring Colorado families have a child welfare system that is accountable and transparent.

We must require the utmost accountability for government systems with the power to separate families, and this bill helps Colorado move in that direction. We ask for your support of HB 25-1200.

Best regards,

Melanie Jordan

Policy Director, Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel