

30th Alaska State Legislature

Judiciary Committee
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Education Committee
Vice-Chair
State Affairs Committee
Select Committee on Legislative
Ethics
Joint Armed Services Committee



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SB 122 Sponsor Statement

After much discussion with all stakeholders in the child protection arena, I decided to introduce SB 122. In simple terms, the bill transfers the Citizens Review Panel from the Department of Health and Social Services to the office of the ombudsman within the legislative branch of state government.

All parties agree this is necessary to give the Citizens Review Panel the autonomy they need to properly review and make recommendations for improvement of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) policies and procedures, to review individual cases if necessary, and to increase public trust in the panel's oversight of OCS.

New provisions in the bill require:

1. OCS to provide the state plan for delivery of child welfare services prepared jointly by OCS and the Secretary of Health and Human Services annually;
2. Allows the CRP to establish guidelines for its operation;
3. Requires the panel and OCS to file a joint evaluation of the child protection services with the legislature every three years;
4. Creates a fine for conviction of violation of confidentiality up to \$2,500;
5. Repeals DHSS jurisdiction over the CRP;
6. Requires OCS to do a review of existing processes for reviewing and overseeing the work of OCS and outline a plan to reduce duplication and improve coordination amongst agencies every two years;
7. Gives the office of the ombudsman authority to promulgate regulations for the CRP; and
8. Transitions the existing CRP to the new statutes.