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Youth who age out of the foster care system frequently share stories about their rights being violated while they were there. There are a variety of reasons youth may not report these incidents, including distrust of CPS staff who placed them in a home where they were mistreated, perception that nothing will be done by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) based on previous concerns that were not addressed, and a fear of retaliation or vulnerability in their placement.

SB 830 (84R) was passed by Senator Kolkhorst in 2015 to alleviate these problems. It gave children and youth in care one central place to report concerns for investigation. The office has experienced a great deal of success in addressing youth concerns to ensure that they remain safe and their rights are protected while in foster care. As the foster care system transforms to a Community-Based system, the Legislature must ensure that entities operating under Community Based Care are able to work in partnership with the Foster Care Ombudsman and are subject to the same accountability measures that DFPS is subject to.

***Recommendations:***

Extend requirements currently applied to DFPS regarding the Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO), to Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCC).

- Clarify that foster youth have the right to make their first complaint to the FCO directly as opposed to any party internal to a provider or DFPS.
- Establish that the FCO is entitled to access SSCC internal records that aren't specifically included in the DFPS IMPACT system.
- Ensure the FCO informs the SSCC of the results of an investigation.
- Exclude SSCCs or other child placing agencies from using the name 'ombudsman' to describe internal complaint lines of providers or an SSCC.