



This Bill Analysis reflects the contents of the bill as it was presented in committee.

HOUSE BILL 12: Remove Sunset/Foster Care Ombudsman Prog

2015-2016 General Assembly

Committee:	House Children, Youth, and Families, if favorable, Judiciary IV	Date:	March 5, 2015
Introduced by:	Rep. Torbett	Prepared by:	Tawanda Foster
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition H12-CSTB-4		Denise Adams Legislative Analysts

SUMMARY: *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) for House Bill 12 would provide a foster care ombudsperson to assist foster parents in Gaston County and further defines the rights and responsibilities of this position. The PCS also makes a technical change to correct a statutory citation.*

BILL ANALYSIS: The PCS for House Bill 12 would add a provision that a parent or juvenile could request the foster care ombudsperson become involved in a matter prior to the disposition order being entered. The PCS gives Gaston County the option to designate an attorney to assist the ombudsman, if requested by the ombudsman. In addition to the records and reports already accessible, it expands access to Department of Social Services case files regarding juveniles who have been placed in foster care at any point. The PCS further allows the ombudsperson to assist pre-adoptive parents or relatives if requested. Finally, the PCS removes the sunset provision which originally was July 1, 2015.

CURRENT LAW: S.L. 2013-111 is an existing local act that establishes a foster care ombudsperson for Gaston County. The act specifies the foster care ombudsperson shall:

- 1) Be a party in all matters involving a juvenile placed in foster care after the disposition hearing and during the review hearing and permanency planning hearings.
- 2) Determine the facts, needs, and available resources to meet the needs of foster families and to protect and promote the interests of foster families.
- 3) Have authority to obtain confidential records where relevant to a case.
- 4) Refer to the social services director or any appropriate law enforcement agency any suspicion that a juvenile is abused, neglected or dependent.
- 5) Be a resource and advocate for foster parents.
- 6) Provide a periodic report on foster placements within the county, including recommendations regarding current and future placements.
- 7) Compile and make available data collected while exercising the official duties.
- 8) Provide information on the role, duties and functions of foster parents and the ombudsperson.
- 9) Comply with other duties or responsibilities deemed appropriate by the board.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The bill would become effective when it becomes law.

