

Good Morning Chair Sweaney & Members of Government Ops (+copied):

This morning I reviewed findings from the [National Civil Legal Needs Study](#) (CLNS), and thought you might find them interesting. I believe the findings support the creation of an Advocate or Ombudsman Office, like the one contemplated in H.522. The CLNS found that:

- **Most people facing situations that have a legal dimension do not turn to the civil justice system for help.** Many people report cost as a concern, doubt that it would help, or sense the problem isn't serious enough. Some want to handle the matter on their own.
- **Over the last twenty years, legal services to individuals and households have declined as a proportion of all legal services provided by the civil justice system.**
- **The kinds of legal problems reported by low- and moderate-income households are more alike than different. They are about bread and butter issues that come up in everyday life.**
- **Especially disadvantaged when it comes to needed legal help are households just above and just below the line that determines eligibility for publicly-funded legal services.**
- **Even with their combined efforts, the private bar and publicly-funded legal services programs now serve only a small portion of legal needs reported by low-income households."**

Bottom-line: the CLNS shows us that many low and moderate income people do not, or cannot, access the justice system. Until the justice system is strengthened, and civil legal needs can be better met, an Ombudsman or Advocate's office would provide an alternative path to resolve a subset of concerns and potential disputes. Your constituents would likely appreciate the assistance, regarding child welfare, or other government services.

I hope you, and your colleagues, will continue to work on H.522 as the session progresses. Best of luck in your ongoing deliberations, and many thanks for your service.

Megan

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On Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:53 AM, Megan Palchak <mgpalchak@gmail.com>
wrote:

Good Morning Members of Government Operations,

Thank you for allowing me to offer to testify on H.522 on Tuesday.

Here are two resources that might be of use:

- **NCSL's summary of Ombudsman/Advocate organizational location, by state:** <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices.aspx>. The Washington state office that I worked in, falls into the first category (legislated within the executive, with specific jurisdiction over the child welfare). For what it's worth, the Hawaii office, which has a broad governmental jurisdiction and investigative focus, is well quite well regarded in the Public Ombuds community. I may be able to help with a connection to the Director (or perhaps former Director now), or others, if the committee would like to consult with offices that are organized differently.
- **American Ombudsman Association -- website includes resources & contacts:** <http://www.usombudsman.org/about/specialty-chapters/>

I hope these resources are useful. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to support your deliberations. I'm happy to research and help with contacts if needed, and would like to stay engaged with the Committee's work.

Many thanks!

Megan

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