Department of Planning and Budget 2025 General Assembly Session State Fiscal Impact Statement

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Bill Number: HB2187 **Patron:** Freitas

Bill Title: Children's Ombudsman; powers and duties.

Bill Summary: Authorizes the Children's Ombudsman to take action on behalf of children for whom a report of abuse or neglect was made. Under current law, the Children's Ombudsman has the authority to take action on behalf of children receiving child-protective services, in foster care, or placed for adoption and children who may have died as a result of alleged abuse or neglect.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes Items Impacted: 44

Explanation: The Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO) indicates that this legislation is expected to

generate a fiscal impact.

Fiscal Summary: The OCO estimates that this legislation would result in additional complaints to investigate, which would require additional staff. Please see the Fiscal Analysis section for more information.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030
Office of the						_
Children's	\$0	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000
Ombudsman						
TOTAL	\$0	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000

Position Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2025</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	FY2027	<u>FY2028</u>	FY2029	<u>FY2030</u>
Office of the						
Children's	0	1	1	1	1	1
Ombudsman						
TOTAL	0	1	1	1	1	1

Fiscal Analysis: This legislation would add to the OCO's jurisdiction cases involving children for whom a report of abuse or neglect was made, regardless of whether the child had an open child-protective services (CPS) case, was in foster care, or was placed for adoption. The OCO indicates that this legislation would be expected to increase the number of cases that the office investigates annually, which would necessitate additional investigation analysts.

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The OCO indicates that during calendar year 2024, the office received 461 total complaints, of which 45 complaints were not associated with an active case. Using those 45 complaints as a benchmark, the OCO estimates that one additional investigation analyst would be needed at this time, at a cost of \$140,000 to cover salary, benefits, and nonpersonnel costs. If the number of complaints exceeds this estimate, additional staff and resources may be required.

Other: None.