

Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 7127

April 7, 2026

Re: Testimony in Support of Office of Child Advocate House Bill 7127

Dear Chairman, Di Palma and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Child Advocate Advisory Committee, we are writing to respectfully urge you to approve the request for an additional \$18,800 dollars for FY 2027 for the Office of the Child Advocate. This office plays a critical role in protecting the safety, rights and well-being of our most vulnerable children, particularly those involved with child welfare, juvenile justice and behavioral health systems. This additional funding is vital to support the legal work of the office, operating expenses, including staff training, stenographic services, office supplies, dues and fees, travel, and computers/ software. Costs in these areas have increased due to the office is now fully staffed. As a committee, we see firsthand the impact of this office that strong advocacy, oversight and accountability have on our most vulnerable children. This is a time when children and families are facing increasing challenges particularly with poverty, mental health, housing, and systemic inequities which put children at risk.

Without adequate funding, The Office of the Child Advocate will not be able to review policy, identify systemic gaps and work to prevent harm before it occurs. Prioritizing child safety and well-being of children is the mission of the office. Children rely on this office as a vital safeguard.

We urge the committee to prioritize this funding request and reaffirm its commitment to protecting the safety for all children in the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Respectfully submitted,

Child Advocate Advisory Board

Denezia Fahie

Ken Fandetti

Tanuja Gandhi, MD, FAPA

Linda Shaw, MD, MSSW, Chair of the Office of the Child Advocate Advisory Committee

Kristen Forbes Cuddy, Esq

Lia Stuhlsatz, Associate Justice

Deidre I. Donaldson, PhD, ABPP, BCBA

Mary Archibald. PhD

