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WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SB 5393

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Thursday, January 27, 2011

J.A. Cherberg Building, Senate Hearing Rm 1, 10:00 a.m.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 5393. My name is Mary Meinig and I am the Director of the Office of the Family & Children's Ombudsman.

I support the intent of SB 5393 to strengthen oversight of the placement of dependent children through random, unannounced home visits, both for those children residing with a parent in an in-home dependency, as well as for children residing in out-of-home care. Unfortunately, we know that there are bad outcomes regarding the safety and welfare of dependent children in state care. Some of these situations may have been prevented through unannounced home visits which can identify problems or concerns not otherwise apparent through scheduled visits. Perhaps most importantly, foster youth tell us they believe they would be safer if case workers conducted unannounced home visits.

SB 5393 appropriately focuses on enhancing the safety and well being of all dependent children in state care, as it applies equally to all caregivers- relatives, kin, foster parents, as well as to parents. This bill only requires unannounced visits for "no less than ten percent" of current caregivers and is therefore not unduly burdensome for the department, supervising agency or caregiver.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our written testimony on this legislation.