

The Louisiana Legislature is Active on Children’s Bills, but Louisiana Ranks Poorly on Child Well-being. Would an Office of Children’s Ombudsman Help?

Louisiana’s Legislature is one of the more active among the 16 southern states on bills related to child welfare. When ranked by the average number of bills it addresses related to child welfare matters, Louisiana’s Legislature is in the top four. Indeed, as the chart indicates, since 2015, only three southern Legislatures have acted on more child welfare-related bills.

While Louisiana’s Legislature is active on matters regarding children, Louisiana ranks near the bottom for child well-being. How does one understand the apparent disconnection between our Legislature’s work and the chronic condition of Louisiana’s children?

In 2021, the four states ranked worst in the nation on child well-being had one deficit in common. The worst states for children lacked a Children’s Ombudsman.

The condition of Louisiana’s children is not due to a lack of attention by the Louisiana Legislature. Nor is the general experience of Louisiana’s children entirely under the Legislature’s control or influence. However, that Louisiana has a child-oriented legislature without significant change in child well-being during the past three decades may indicate the Legislature is left to work without all the information it requires.

Certainly, state agencies report to the Louisiana Legislature. We have seen legislative oversight activity increase when Louisiana’s child-serving agencies stumble.

In 2021, the four states ranked worst in the nation on child well-being all lacked an Office of Children’s Ombudsman.

not meet their needs. In addition, without an Ombuds for Children, Louisiana lacks an objective official who provides annual reports to the Louisiana Legislature and the public about who well Louisiana is meeting children’s needs.

In short, despite the Louisiana Legislature’s active work on child welfare legislation, many of Louisiana’s legislative actions are only partially informed by state departments and agency requests. Without an objective, independent Office of Children’s Ombuds, the decisions of the Louisiana Legislature will remain only partially informed.

Learn More: Read the free white paper, *Louisiana Needs an Office of Children’s Ombuds*, available at LouisianaChildAdvocacy.com

