



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II  
LT. GOVERNOR

December 30, 2020

Michigan Senate  
State Capitol Building  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Senators,

Today I am returning Enrolled Senate Bill 983 to you without my approval.

The Office of the Children's Ombudsman is an autonomous agency within the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) that has the critical mission of improving child welfare through legislative advocacy, investigations, review of Department of Health and Human Services policies and practices, and even legal action. This bill would transfer the Office of the Children's Ombudsman from the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) to the Legislative Council.

Moving this critical accountability and advocacy resource for children to the Legislative Council would be a mistake, for several reasons. First, DTMB's resources and institutional expertise in holding state agencies accountable is unmatched. Second, it would make little sense to locate an independent agency designed for "legislative advocacy" *within* the legislature. Finally, the powers of the Ombudsman are fundamentally executive in nature, not legislative.

For the foregoing reasons, I am vetoing this bill. Nevertheless, I look forward to working with the legislature to improve Michigan's child welfare system, including by ensuring that the Office of the Children's Ombudsman has the support necessary to advocate effectively on behalf of Michigan's most vulnerable children.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor