



Bill Summary: Michigan Corrections Ombudsman Legislation

Bill Purpose: Increase transparency and accountability in the Michigan Department of Corrections (“MDOC”) and the existing [Legislative Corrections Ombudsman](#)’s office (“Ombudsman”) by allowing more people to file complaints for independent review, including family members of the incarcerated and correctional staff and contractors. It will implement uniform and easily accessible procedures and data reporting. Michigan Citizens for Prison Reform and FAMM support this bill.

Bill Status: This bill is not yet law. The bill is expected to be introduced in early September in the Michigan Senate. To become law, it must go through committees, pass through both the Senate and House, and be signed by the Governor.

What the Bill Would Do:

1. **Name change:** Change the term “ombudsman” to “ombudsperson.”
2. **Change who can file complaints:** The bill, if passed, would add family members, prisoner advocates, and corrections employees and contractors to the list of those able to file complaints and seek review and investigation from the Ombudsman.
3. **Data collection and transparency:** Requires the Ombudsman to publish general complaint data monthly, and include the following in a public annual report - the total number of complaints that were investigated, denied, resolved, unsubstantiated, or undecided; the number of complaints filed, broken down by subject matter, including but not limited to, racial discrimination and medical treatment issues; significant issues investigated; each recommendation made to the Department and the accompanying response.
4. **Uniform procedures:** Requires the Ombudsman to create a standardized complaint form within 120 business days of the bill becoming law, and to acknowledge receipt of filed complaints.
5. **Accessible information:** Requires the Ombudsman to place the standardized complaint form on its website and the Department to place hard copies in all law libraries and elsewhere throughout the facility.
6. **Experts:** Allows the Ombudsman to consult or contract with experts to assist with investigations, inspections, etc. Gives experts prison facility access while accompanied by the Ombudsman.
7. **Time Limits:** Creates a 14-day time limit for the Department to provide a response in defense or mitigation of an adverse opinion the Ombudsman intends to publish. Requires the Department to notify the Ombudsman of any actions it takes on the Ombudsman’s recommendations within 30 days. Requires the Ombudsman to notify the complainant and the Department of its action within 45 business days of the action.

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