

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the Office of the Corrections  
3       Ombudsman; creating s. 11.92, F.S.; providing  
4       legislative findings; providing definitions; creating  
5       the Office of the Corrections Ombudsman within the  
6       legislative branch; providing for staff; specifying  
7       the duties of the office; providing for the  
8       appointment of a Corrections Ombudsman; requiring that  
9       the Ombudsman meet certain criteria; requiring the  
10      Legislature to establish a Corrections Oversight  
11      Committee on or before a certain date; providing  
12      duties and membership of the committee; requiring the  
13      Department of Corrections to provide the Ombudsman and  
14      committee members with access to certain department  
15      facilities and records; authorizing the Ombudsman and  
16      committee members access to such facilities  
17      unannounced; requiring confidentiality of in-person  
18      communications between incarcerated persons or  
19      facility staff members and the Ombudsman or a  
20      committee member; providing that correspondence  
21      between an incarcerated person and the office is  
22      privileged; providing that the decision, or failure,  
23      to file a complaint with the office does not impact  
24      the inmate grievance procedure; providing that the  
25      office need not investigate or process complaints in

the order received; requiring the office to submit to the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives a specified report annually; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

**Section 1. Section 11.92, Florida Statutes, is created to read:**

11.92 Office of the Corrections Ombudsman.—

(1) The Legislature finds that the protection of the health, safety, welfare, and rights of persons who are incarcerated within the state correctional system is a matter of urgent public concern. Current law does not provide adequate and independent oversight of the Department of Corrections to ensure accountability, monitor conditions of confinement, and investigate complaints. It is appropriate and necessary to create an independent entity as unit of the legislative branch of state government in order to restore public trust in the department.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Committee" means the Corrections Oversight Committee.

(b) "Correctional facility" means a state correctional institution or contractor-operated correctional facility.

51 (c) "Department" means the Department of Corrections.

52 (d) "Office" means the Office of the Corrections  
53 Ombudsman.

54 (e) "Ombudsman" means the Corrections Ombudsman.

55 (3) The Office of the Corrections Ombudsman is created as a  
56 unit of the legislative branch of state government. The office  
57 is independent of the Department of Corrections and reports  
58 directly to the Legislature. The office shall be headed by the  
59 Corrections Ombudsman. The office may hire staff and use  
60 volunteers as necessary to perform its duties. The office shall  
61 do all of the following:

62 (a) Receive, track, investigate, and attempt to resolve  
63 complaints concerning correctional facilities made by or on  
64 behalf of incarcerated persons, supporters of incarcerated  
65 persons, and the public.

66 (b) Monitor and evaluate the conditions of confinement and  
67 the treatment of incarcerated persons in correctional  
68 facilities. The office may inspect such facilities at any time,  
69 but must inspect each facility at least once each year.

70 (c) Collect and analyze data relating to serious  
71 incidents, violence, and deaths that occur in correctional  
72 facilities.

73 (d) Make recommendations to the department and Legislature  
74 which identify solutions to systemic problems, policy changes,  
75 or corrective actions necessary to protect the health, safety,

76 welfare, and rights of incarcerated persons.

77 (e) Provide information, as appropriate, to incarcerated  
78 persons, supporters of incarcerated persons, and the public  
79 about the rights of incarcerated persons and the services of the  
80 office.

81 (4) The Legislature shall appoint the Ombudsman to a 5-  
82 year term by a majority vote and may only remove the Ombudsman  
83 by a majority vote. The Ombudsman may be reappointed for a 5-  
84 year term. The Ombudsman:

85 (a) Must have knowledge and experience in corrections and  
86 human rights.

87 (b) May not have worked for the department in the 10 years  
88 preceding his or her appointment.

89 (c) May not have a family member who has worked for the  
90 department in the 10 years preceding his or her appointment.

91 (5) (a) On or before January 1, 2027, the Legislature shall  
92 establish a Corrections Oversight Committee composed of 15  
93 voting members. The committee shall meet quarterly to advise,  
94 assist, and provide guidance to the Ombudsman; however, the  
95 Ombudsman is not required to accept such advice, assistance, or  
96 guidance.

97 (b) Four members of the Legislature shall be appointed to  
98 the committee. The Senate Committee on Rules shall appoint two  
99 members of the Senate who are not members of the same political  
100 party and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall

101 appoint two members of the House of Representatives who are not  
102 members of the same political party.

103 (c) The legislative members appointed pursuant to  
104 paragraph (b) shall appoint the remaining 11 members of the  
105 committee and must include at least one:

106 1. Licensed physician.

107 2. Licensed mental or behavioral health professional.

108 3. Educator.

109 4. Member of the clergy.

110 5. Former administrative employee of the department.

111 6. Man who is a citizen of the United States and was  
112 formerly incarcerated in a correctional facility for a term of  
113 imprisonment of 3 or more years within the 10 years preceding  
114 his appointment.

115 7. Woman who is a citizen of the United States and was  
116 formerly incarcerated in a correctional facility for a term of  
117 imprisonment of 3 or more years within the 10 years preceding  
118 her appointment.

119 8. Family member of a person who is incarcerated in a  
120 correctional facility at the time of the family member's  
121 appointment.

122 9. Representative of a nonprofit prisoner advocacy group.

123 10. Person with a background in data analysis.

124 11. Person with experience in inmate reentry services.

125 (d) Each committee member shall be appointed to a 3-year

126 term. However, for the purpose of achieving staggered terms, the  
127 members initially appointed under subparagraphs (c)6.-11. shall  
128 each serve a 2-year term. All subsequent appointments shall be  
129 for 3-year terms. Any vacancy must be filled in the same manner  
130 as the original appointment for the remainder of the unexpired  
131 term.

132 (6) The department shall provide the Ombudsman and  
133 committee members with immediate access to correctional  
134 facilities, staff members of such facilities, persons  
135 incarcerated in such facilities, and records of such facilities  
136 which the Ombudsman or committee members determine are needed to  
137 carry out the duties of the office. The Ombudsman and committee  
138 members may access any correctional facility at any time,  
139 unannounced, and speak confidentially with any incarcerated  
140 person or staff member.

141 (7) Written correspondence between an incarcerated person  
142 and the office, including the Ombudsman or a committee member,  
143 is privileged mail under rule 33-210.103, Florida Administrative  
144 Code.

145 (8) The decision, or failure, to file a complaint with the  
146 office does not impact the inmate grievance procedure  
147 established under s. 944.331.

148 (9) The office is not required to investigate every  
149 complaint or process complaints in the order received.

150 (10) Beginning December 1, 2027, the office shall submit

151 an annual report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker  
152 of the House of Representatives which summarizes the activities,  
153 findings, and recommendations of the office.

154       **Section 2.** For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of  
155 \$250,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the General  
156 Revenue Fund to the Office of the Corrections Ombudsman for the  
157 purposes of implementing and administering this act.

158       **Section 3.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.