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**House of Representatives**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg

**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** All House Members

**FROM:** Representative Scott A. Petri  
178<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

**DATE:** November 18, 2011

**SUBJECT:** House Bill 544 (Previous Session: HB 788, HB1710, HB 2028)

Many of you have cosponsored this bill in the past and you are welcome to participate again.

The bill establishes a state-wide ombudsman which will be called a child advocate under the most recent bill that is being redrafted for introduction and will be before the Judiciary Committee. This bill had been referred to the Children and Youth Committee for the last several sessions. Unfortunately, it never received a hearing and never obtained the opportunity for a Committee vote or the opportunity to be heard on the floor.

The bill was originally written for Portia Bennett who was a young girl who tragically died in Philadelphia as a result of neglect by the Department of Human Services (DHS), the police department, and the school district.

A case arose thereafter against the city under exception to the provision for sovereign immunity. The case was not successful and was preliminarily dismissed.

Nonetheless, the recent Penn State allegations demonstrate the continuing need for this legislation. Unfortunately it takes a high profile incident such as the Penn State allegations for people to want to take action. We should always remember that this is not about the alleged perpetrators, but is about the victims.

Please support me in cosponsoring this legislation. I will be happy to provide you with a copy once the bill is redrafted. The intention is to house the Child Advocate in the Attorney General's office. You should also know that over the last several years there has been a task force who has discussed the details of this bill and are substantially together on its specific provision and certainly agree wholeheartedly that the measure is necessary.

If you would like to cosponsor the legislation, please contact Ann Marie Segilia at [asegilia@pahousegop.com](mailto:asegilia@pahousegop.com).

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