Per California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 548.5, the following information will be posted to CalHR's Career Executive Assignment Action Proposals website for 30 calendar days when departments propose new CEA concepts or major revisions to existing CEA concepts. Presence of the department-submitted CEA Action Proposal information on CalHR's website does not indicate CalHR support for the proposal.

### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Date</th>
<th>May 12, 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Department</td>
<td>California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS)</td>
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3. Organizational Placement (Division/Branch/Office Name)

Office of the Ombuds / Executive Branch

4. CEA Position Title

Ombuds

5. Summary of proposed position description and how it relates to the program's mission or purpose.

Under the general direction of the Chief Operating Officer (COO), the Ombuds is statutorily required to act as an advocate for members of CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program and participants of the CalSTRS Cash Balance Program and to make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) regarding complaints made by school employees, members, employee organizations, the Legislature, or the public regarding actions of the employees of the system. The incumbent provides channels to submit complaints, conducts fair and impartial investigations, and develops options for resolution. The incumbent acts as an independent special advisor to the CEO and COO, providing management advice, consultation, and recommendations on member issues that are often complex, highly sensitive, or controversial. The Ombuds also provides management and policy direction to the Teachers' Retirement Board Election Program.

6. Reports to: (Class Title/Level)

Chief Operating Officer, a position under the compensation setting authority of the TRB.

7. Relationship with Department Director (Select one)

- [ ] Member of department's Executive Management Team, and has frequent contact with director on a wide range of department-wide issues.
- [X] Not a member of department’s Executive Management Team but has frequent contact with the Executive Management Team on policy issues.

(Explain): Per Statute, the Ombuds is required to make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer regarding complaints by school employees, members, employee organizations, the Legislature, or the public, regarding actions of the employees of the system. The Ombuds will provide management advice and consultation to the CEO and COO on member issues that are often sensitive, confidential or controversial.

8. Organizational Level (Select one)

- [ ] 1st
- [ ] 2nd
- [X] 3rd
- [ ] 4th
- [ ] 5th (mega departments only - 17,001+ allocated positions)
B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST

9. What are the duties and responsibilities of the CEA position? Be specific and provide examples.

Provide senior leadership, management, and policy direction for the activities of the Office of the Ombuds. Serve as an advocate for CalSTRS members, providing independent, impartial, confidential, and informal assistance to those that contact the office with problems, complaints, or disputes. Provide a respectful, safe, and confidential environment that fosters trust for individuals to discuss their problems and concerns by helping to clarify issues, identify goals, and develop and consider a range of options for resolution. Oversee case management and the monitoring of trends and emerging issues. Advocate for procedural fairness in the content and administration of CalSTRS’ practices, processes and policies. Develop, implement, and maintain policies that formalize the services and expectations of the office and communicate professional standards of ethics and integrity.

Act as an independent special advisor and make recommendations to the CEO, COO, and the board on sensitive member problems, disputes, or complaints so that problems may be prevented from escalating or become recurring. Participate in board meetings to provide briefings, continuing education and consultation on general trends and patterns of complaints. Prepare formal reports to provide information on emergent and potentially systemic issues that may be highly sensitive or controversial. Produce and disseminate the Ombuds Issue Reports to Executive Staff, senior leadership, and the board regarding issues identified by members, constituents, stakeholders or staff that require thorough analysis for possible policy and program changes, process improvements, and to create and/or improve products and services.

Maintain knowledge of the intricacies of CalSTRS plan design, Teachers' Retirement Law, and member benefit structure to investigate complaints and to provide expert consultation. Work with CalSTRS staff to investigate complaints and develop options for resolution, avoiding any situation that would result in a conflict of interest. Oversee the activities that document and track Service Level Agreements and Records of Understanding to ensure prompt resolution of cross-functional issues faced by members. Review member accounts, pertinent documents, and witness recordings of the Contact Center regarding member complaints and disputes. Ensure that the member is aware of relevant laws, regulations, policies, and appeal rights. Confer with Executive Staff and Legal Services to advocate for members when necessary prior to and during the Executive Review process or transition to Administrative Appeals. Provide accurate communication to the member and staff of the casework status.

Oversee the development of well-defined internal and external communication strategies, channels, and approaches to enhance understanding and maximize awareness of the Ombuds program and services. Serve as a source of information about CalSTRS’ policies and member benefits. Represent CalSTRS in presentations to members as an extension of the CalSTRS Speaker’s Bureau. Participate in Client Advisory and Employer Advisory Committee meetings to build and strengthen member relations and to foster trust and communication. Serve as CalSTRS’ primary point of contact and resource to members of the Legislature, or their staff, to provide information and discuss constituent issues of CalSTRS members. Participate on the cross-functional teams of Senior Leadership that collaborate to ensure continuous improvement of operational programs and enterprise-wide processes that support CalSTRS operational objectives and effective risk management, avoiding any conflicts of interest with respect to the position’s obligation to be an independent and impartial member advocate.

Provide management and policy direction to the TRB Election Program pursuant to regulations adopted by the board. Conduct ongoing reviews of regulations and make recommendations for changes, as appropriate. Establish, implement, and review board election operational procedures that uphold the integrity of the process. Oversee the development, coordination, and dissemination of election communication materials. Oversee the vendor relationship, contract, and related RFP processes for board election services.

Participate in professional Ombuds organizations by attending meetings, trainings, and workshops. Network with peer Ombuds to learn and exchange best practice information.
B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST (continued)

10. How critical is the program's mission or purpose to the department's mission as a whole? Include a description of the degree to which the program is critical to the department's mission.

☐ Program is directly related to department's primary mission and is critical to achieving the department's goals.

☐ Program is indirectly related to department's primary mission.

☐ Program plays a supporting role in achieving department's mission (i.e., budget, personnel, other admin functions).

Description: The Ombuds' program is directly related to CalSTRS' mission, which is to secure the financial future and sustain the trust of California's educators. The mission of the Ombuds' Office is be truthful and act with integrity, foster respect for all CalSTRS' members, and advocate for procedural fairness in the content and administration of CalSTRS' practices, processes, and policies.

As a statutorily required advocate for CalSTRS members and program participants, the Ombuds oversees programs and services that provide a respectful, safe, and confidential environment that fosters trust for individuals to discuss their problems and concerns, and to report complaints and disputes that are not resolved through the usual CalSTRS' channels. The incumbent will oversee the development and implementation of communication and engagement strategies that build and strengthen member relations, foster partnerships, and develop influential relationships that advance the interests of CalSTRS' members. The Ombuds provides management advice and consultation and makes recommendations to Executive Staff and the Teachers' Retirement Board on sensitive and critical issues of CalSTRS' members and participants.

A robust and responsive Ombuds' program is essential to build and foster strong relationships with stakeholders and to encourage trusted conversations. The functions performed and are overseen by the Ombuds are critical to upholding the organization's strong reputation as trusted stewards.
B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST (continued)

11. Describe what has changed that makes this request necessary. Explain how the change justifies the current request. Be specific and provide examples.

Education Code Section 22302 requires the Teachers’ Retirement Board (board) to have in place an ombudsperson to serve as an advocate for the members of CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program and participants of CalSTRS Cash Balance Benefit Program. Per statute, the duties of the ombudsperson shall include reviewing and making recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer regarding complaints by school employees, members, employee organizations, the Legislature, or the public, regarding actions of the employees of the system. For the purpose of this request, Stakeholders is defined as the aforementioned population.

The Ombuds position was created by statute in 1984, at a time when the CalSTRS organization was much smaller and the activities of the Ombuds were much more narrow. Since that time, the number of members and beneficiaries have grown exponentially and CalSTRS programs and services have grown in size and complexity, in part, to the changing needs of CalSTRS’ members, a myriad of legislation, laws, and regulations, including PEPRA which added an entirely new tier of member benefits, and the board’s adoption of a set of actuarial assumptions that reflect CalSTRS’ members increasing life expectancies that required legislation to stabilize CalSTRS funding. CalSTRS currently serves over 980,000 public school educators, retirees, and beneficiaries in addition to employers from the state’s nearly 1,800 school districts, county offices of education, and community college districts. With the growth in membership and services, there is greater need to grow the Ombuds’ program to provide robust and responsive services that can continue to meet the needs of stakeholders as the Legislature intended. Due to the nature of the work required by statute, and the intricacies of CalSTRS’ plan design and benefit structure, it is necessary elevate the visibility of the Ombuds and promote their advocacy services that support and ensure the development and maintenance of strong relationships through trusted conversations, and provide a place where members can turn to resolve issues and complaints. This vital program helps to ensure that the voices of stakeholders are listened to and are heard, which is critical to upholding the organization’s strong reputation and level of trust. Ongoing engagement is vital to business operations and sustainability practices as CalSTRS’ stakeholders offer important and influential voices in the design and execution of CalSTRS benefits and services that provide retirement security. Much of the work of the Ombuds is complaint driven. The issues and complaints brought to the attention of the Ombuds can draw attention to problem areas which can affect CalSTRS in a positive way by providing early warnings of new issues, trends and patterns of complaints, and information on potentially systemic issues that require resolution. The Ombuds conducts fair and impartial investigations regarding complaints and develops options for resolution. The unique positioning of the Ombuds as an independent structure serves to provide unfiltered information that can produce insight and resolutions that will assist CalSTRS in the prioritizing of organizational efforts, including possible policy and program changes, process improvements, and creating and/or improving products and services.

CalSTRS’ fiduciary and investor roles make it highly visible in the media and continually place it under intense scrutiny from the public, teachers and their legislative representatives, and other governmental and regulatory bodies. In recent years CalSTRS has dealt with several high profile, controversial and sensitive stakeholder issues requiring complex, thoughtful, and transparent dialogue. At CalSTRS, stakeholder relations has become a continuous process and there is greater need to recognize and emphasize the complexities that exist in engagement process with CalSTRS members, school employees, member organizations, the Legislature and the public, to resolve issues, concerns, problems, complaints and disputes. Outlined in the CalSTRS 2022-2025 Strategic Plan is the goal for CalSTRS to be recognized as Trusted Stewards with emphasis on transparency and accountability. A key objective outlined in this goal includes growing strategic relationships with policymakers, stakeholders and partner organizations which is critical to upholding the level of trust with members, employee organizations, the Legislature and its CalSTRS constituents, the State of California, and the public. Progress indicators of this goal include ensuring that external engagement mechanisms are defined and determined and that strategic relationships contribute to positive outcomes to advance CalSTRS’ mission. The Office of the Ombuds is a key part of the structure for building trust and promoting a service culture.

The establishment of the CEA will provide the necessary leadership and management direction to ensure that CalSTRS develops and fosters collaborative stakeholder relationships that advance the interests of CalSTRS’ members.
C. ROLE IN POLICY INFLUENCE

12. Provide 3-5 specific examples of policy areas over which the CEA position will be the principle policy maker. Each example should cite a policy that would have an identifiable impact. Include a description of the statewide impact of the assigned program.

The Ombuds will be a member of CalSTRS Senior Leadership team providing consultation and management advice to the CEO, COO, Executive Staff, and the board on member issues and complaints. The Ombuds policy role includes, but is not limited to the following:

- As an independent structure, operating independent of the ordinary line and staff structure, the Ombuds acts an advocate for CalSTRS members, providing independent, impartial, confidential, and informal assistance to those that contact the office seeking resolution of conflicts and disputes, requiring in-depth knowledge of CalSTRS plan design, Teachers’ Retirement Law, member benefit structure, and member appeal rights.

- As mandated by statute, the Ombuds will act as a special advisor to the CEO and will provide recommendations regarding complaints received from school employees, members, employee organizations, the Legislature, and the public regarding actions of the employees of CalSTRS.

- Provide critical subject matter expertise to the CEO, COO, Executive Staff and the board on sensitive issues that affect CalSTRS stakeholders. The Ombuds will monitor and evaluate complaints and recommend policy and program changes, and improvements to products and services, by identifying early warnings of new issues, trends and patterns of complaints, and potentially systemic issues that require resolution.

- Independently conduct fair and impartial investigations regarding complaints and strive to ensure procedural fairness the application and interpretation of Teachers’ Retirement Law and CalSTRS’ policies. The incumbent will develop a range of options to resolve member disputes which will mitigate costly appeals and litigation.

- Serve as CalSTRS’ primary point of contact and resource to members of the Legislature, or their staff, to provide information and discuss constituent issues of CalSTRS members.

- Develop and implement the communication channels and systems for reporting complaints. The Ombuds will identify gaps in current procedures and communication channels and develop solutions.

- Provide management and policy direction to the TRB Election Program pursuant to regulations adopted by the board and will conduct ongoing reviews of regulations and make recommendations for changes as appropriate. The Ombuds will establish the operational procedures that uphold the integrity of the election process. The CEA will oversee the development, coordination and dissemination of election communication materials and oversee the vendor relationship, contract, and related RFP processes for board election services.

The Ombuds is responsible for the following policies and formal report:

- Office of the Ombuds Policy, which formalizes the services and expectations of the Ombuds and the Office of the Ombuds.

- Guiding Principles of Practice, which are a set of professional standards to reflect the commitment to ethical conduct and to maintain the integrity of the CalSTRS Office of the Ombuds.

- Ombuds Issue Report, a report provided to the board and Executive Staff that identifies issues from members, constituents, stakeholders or staff that require thorough analysis for possible policy and program changes, process improvements, and to create and/or improve products and services.
C. ROLE IN POLICY INFLUENCE (continued)

13. What is the CEA position’s scope and nature of decision-making authority?

The Ombuds position has been created by statute and is empowered to act as an advocate for CalSTRS members and with discretion to respond to complaints received by members, school employees, employee organizations, the Legislature, or the public, regarding actions of CalSTRS employees. This position serves as a key policy and member relations expert and has extensive contact with a wide variety of stakeholders. In this role, the incumbent uses exceptional judgment and advanced concepts in conflict resolution to handle cases that may involve various levels of the organization’s hierarchy and sensitive issues that have the potential for material reputational and operational risks if not addressed or resolved.

The CEA will provide leadership and technical expertise to build CalSTRS’ capacity for member advocacy and will develop advocacy strategies that enhance awareness and the effectiveness of the Ombuds’ program and services. The Ombuds will determine the appropriate communication channels and engagement methods for the different stakeholders, with varying needs, concerns and perspectives. The Ombuds is responsible to provide independent, impartial, confidential, and informal assistance to those that contact the office with problems, disputes, or complaints that could not be resolved through the normal CalSTRS channels. The Ombuds is empowered to set the tone for a respectful, safe and confidential environment for members to discuss their disputes and complaints.

The Ombuds mediates and facilitates conflict resolution related to a wide range of member issues and disputes that may impact a member’s retirement security. The Ombuds will independently and impartially investigate complaints and disputes and develop a range of options for resolution. The incumbent will have access to all information, documents, records, and individuals of the organization, as permitted by law, to perform the function.

The CEA monitors trends and patterns in support of early detection of issues of potential significance and advises the CEO and Executive Staff on appropriate remedial and preventive action, including making recommendations for policy and program changes. The insights gained by the Ombuds will be used in determining the prioritization of concerns and material issues and help establish the direction of CalSTRS strategic planning.

14. Will the CEA position be developing and implementing new policy, or interpreting and implementing existing policy? How?

The CEA will continually assess the programs and services of the Ombuds’ Office and formulate and implement new strategies that enhance advocacy services to members and strengthen member relations. In their responsibility to monitor general trends and patterns of complaints, and to provide information on potentially systemic issues, the Ombuds will make recommendations for changes to CalSTRS’ policies and programs. The CEA will make policy recommendations on the impacts of new and proposed legislation and regulations on CalSTRS programs for early and effective resolutions to conflicts with stakeholders.