

Hello,

I am writing in support of SB 543. I have been a CASA in Washington county for 17 years. One of the largest barriers for the families I work with is poverty. They can not afford after school programs, classes and day care for their children. These are the children who need the programs the most.

I am currently working with a family with six children. The children are in DHS custody but are still living at home in hope that with services and support the children will not have to go into foster care. Four of the children have told me they would like to take piano lessons. Three of the children would also like to do sports and one young child wanted to be in scouts to be able to go on a hike. However this family has extremely limited financial resources and cannot afford these activities or even the gas for the family car to transport the children to activities. As a CASA I am working with the DHS case worker to help the family access some of these activities for the children. The programs we have found have been prohibitively expensive and complicated to access.

There is a large need for more programs with very low or no cost for families living in poverty. This will save the state money in the long run as children will be more successful and will avoid the need for intervention by the state.

I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you,
Luann Pelton
CASA - Washington County