

Submitter: Emily Wiese  
On Behalf Of: CASA  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Thank the members of the Oregon Joint Ways and Means committee for inviting this public testimony.

My name is Emily Wiese. I am providing testimony in support of the CASA Organization, with whom I have been a volunteer since 2019 as a CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocate. During this time, I have had the privilege of working with many youths following their placements into the Juvenile Dependency System.

I have seen first-hand what an incredibly destabilizing experience it is for children to be removed from their homes and placed into foster care. There are very few things that remain consistent throughout this process. Children often experience multiple foster placements, multiple schools, and multiple caseworkers. With so much change and disruption, CASA volunteers are an imperative presence of consistency that these children as desperately in need of. CASA volunteers typically commit to serving a case through their time of appointment until the case has been closed by the department of human services, which is on average 2 years in the state of Oregon. Throughout this time, CASAs provide multifaceted support to children, their foster families, and often their families of origin. We attend school meetings, family visits, doctor's appointments, karate competitions, and court appearances. We show up consistently for these children because they matter to us, and because we believe they are deserving of advocacy and support as they navigate a tremendously challenging time of their lives.

Within the legal sector, CASA's offer an impartial perspective to Judges as they work to determine what is in the best interest of the child, providing detailed reports and documentation of our findings and recommendations.

The CASA program facilitates better outcomes for children in the foster care system. Observational studies have shown that children assigned a CASA perform better academically and behaviorally in school and are more likely to receive all court-ordered services and have a plan for permanency.

Adequate funding is imperative for the CASA program to continue serving the children of Clackamas County and the State of Oregon. We remain committed to advocating for children and we request the State's continued financial commitment of 6.4 million dollars statewide over the next two years in order to do so. We all share a priority for supporting children that are experiencing trauma. One way we can do this that makes a demonstrated difference is by providing the funding to sustain and strengthen the CASA program.

Thank you.