



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA of Linn County

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Advocating for abused and
neglected children in
Linn County since 1987.
Tax ID 93-0953615

Lift up
a child's voice.
A child's life.™



Tuesday, April 11, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee,

I am Leslee Mayers, the Executive Director of CASA of Linn County. Apologies for not being able to attend a session in person, and thank you for accepting written remarks.

I am asking you to continue funding Court Appointed Special Advocate programs in Oregon. We are mandated by law to be appointed to a case when the court determines that there is a threat of harm or neglect to a child. In 2022 in Linn County, we served 158 youth through 59 incredible volunteer advocates. We still have over 90 kids on our waitlist needing an advocate. We are working hard to recruit and train additional volunteers to meet that need. The funding we have received in the past has been instrumental in allowing us to focus on the recruitment, training, support, and retention of these volunteers.

I am proud to be part of one of the nation's most robust state-wide CASA programs. As a newer Executive Director, they have been a critical source of training and orientation as I have come into my role, all best to serve our most vulnerable kids in Linn County.

This year we are asking \$6.4 million to fund the next 24 months of court-appointed advocacy and children who have experienced abuse and neglect. We put \$2 back into the child welfare system for every dollar we receive in public funding. There are compelling benefits for youth with a CASA.

Kids with a CASA:

- Are more likely to receive all court-order services.
- Are more likely to stay in school because they are getting the services needed to be successful.
- Are less likely to re-enter the foster care system after their reunification with family.

Some of our advocate volunteers in Linn County have shared with me how they are the only person in their foster youth's life that is not being paid to be there (a kid pointed this out) and how for some of our cases, they are the only consistent adult in their foster kid's life during their time in foster care.

Your support is critical to us continuing this vital work of advocating for children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect and giving them a voice. Thank you for your time,

Leslee Mayers
Executive Director
CASA of Linn County