

Good evening, Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee. My name is Naoma Armstrong. I am a volunteer with CASA of Eastern Oregon. I live in Ontario, Oregon. I greatly appreciate this effort by the committee to hear us out on important matters.

I am here today with my request that our state allot the \$6.4 million dollars to fund Oregon CASA programs so that my program, CASA of Eastern Oregon, can continue to maintain its service to children in Malheur, Baker, Grant, Harney, Lake, and Union counties. In addition to each program in the state providing nearly \$100 thousand (or more) worth of volunteer hours each year and being one of the most efficient state-mandated programs, I also have some personal reflections to share as to why I believe in the value of CASA.

Oregon's children in foster care depend on us to speak for them as an advocate. As a former foster parent and an adoptive parent to a child who was in DHS care, I understand the importance of having a "voice" for the child as decisions are made which affect them. A CASA advocate provides that "voice". I realize that the visits I make with my CASA kids are an important part of their future.

Also, as a retired teacher, I have seen the impact that child abuse can have on not only the children, but the whole environment involved in helping that child, which means it impacts the classroom. Our future is in the hands of today's students. Let's make their well-being an essential component by funding the CASA program for the state of Oregon.

Please allow us to continue our essential service to children and families. Thank you for your time today.

Naoma Armstrong
CASA of Eastern Oregon