

Submitter:

Keith OBrien

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB3196

As an Oregonian, Executive Director of a local Oregon CASA program, and a CASA volunteer myself, I writing to urge the committee to support HB136 and adopt the -1 amendment to include CASA programs.

I have served as a CASA for three unique children who needed help, support, and encouragement in one of the most challenging parts of their young lives. All three of them were victims of parental substance use, and needed help and support from a caring adult whose sole purpose was their best interests. The trauma that these children have been exposed to is nothing short of alarming, and the public systems that are designed to help them have a hard time holding on to that specific child's story and needs. CASA volunteers fill an essential role in ensuring that these children aren't forgotten about. At the end of one of my cases, the teenager who I was advocating for told me they felt like I was the only one in the process who really listened to them and their concerns, and that just having someone who understood them made all the difference.

For our local program, VOCA funds are essential to providing advocacy to nearly 50 children in foster care each year. Without them, we would struggle to sustain the ability to advocate for these kids and be there to listen.

I implore you to adopt the -1 amendment that includes CASA programs and pass the bill out of committee.