

Submitter: AnnMarie Webster
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

I urge you to support HB 3196. I manager volunteers for CASA of Clackamas County. I am also a native Oregonian and a long-time resident of West Linn. Personally, as an employee of CASA of Clackamas County I know HB 3196 would help pay the salary of one CASA Manager. That one manager can support 30 volunteers who then are supporting 60 or more kids. I have watched case after case where our volunteer advocates have kept the case to be about the child's best interest. Children who have experienced trauma but then in the end have a healthy outcome makes a difference for all of us. They are more likely to become productive and healthy adults who will contribute to our community.

Children with a CASA are more likely to have their case be completed in a shorter amount of time. This doesn't mean it was rushed; our volunteers thoughtfully and thoroughly investigate and advocate for what is best. They help all legal parties and the judge to keep their eyes on what matters, our children. Being in care of ODHS is a trauma to children, children who have already been through too much trauma. The majority of the kids want to be with their parents, it's all they know. Our advocates help these kids to not languish in foster care.

I have also seen volunteers supporting the parents, steering them to get services to help with whatever issues brought their children to foster care. I have seen parents who get a parent mentor and learn a skill and say, "I didn't know I was supposed to be parenting that way". I've seen parents go through substance abuse treatment and learn so much about themselves and the trauma they may have experienced. They learn to be a responsible parent and a better member of our community.

Caseworkers and attorneys have so much on their plates. Our volunteers help them to know what the focus should be, they research programs the caseworkers and attorneys may not have thought about. Our volunteers write a comprehensive report for all parties. I have been told by multiple judges that the CASA report is the first report they will read. It is the report with the most helpful information.

This bill is not a cost, it is an investment into the future of our children and their parents.

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