

Submitter: Kimberly Ficklin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

Today, the House Committee on Judiciary will hold a public hearing on House Bill 3196 at 3:00 pm. This bill, if passed, will allocate funds to the Oregon Department of Justice to backfill reductions in federal Victims of Crime Act grants.

This means that CASA programs statewide will have the opportunity to reconnect to vital VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funds during the next grant cycle. This will allow us to reestablish a critical funding stream that has long been essential in supporting CASA programs' ability to serve vulnerable children. These funds help ensure that children who have experienced abuse or neglect receive the advocacy, services, and resources they need to heal and thrive. Reaccessing this funding will significantly strengthen our ability to provide high-quality services, support our dedicated staff and volunteers, and ultimately improve the outcomes for the children we serve.

CASA programs are an integral part of the larger child protection system, working alongside key entities to ensure the safety and well-being of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Our role complements the work of organizations like the Oregon Child Advocacy Centers (OCAC) and the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (OCADSV) by providing a unique layer of advocacy and support.

While OCACs offer a safe, child-friendly space for children to receive interviews and forensic assessments, CASA volunteers are the consistent, caring adult who advocates for the child's best interests throughout the duration of their case. CASA programs bridge the gap by offering personalized, long-term support to children, ensuring that their voices are heard in court and that their needs are met throughout the legal process.

Similarly, OCADSV works to address domestic and sexual violence, providing survivors with resources, support, and advocacy. CASA programs complement this by focusing on children affected by these situations, advocating for their safety, mental health, and stability. Both organizations rely on VOCA funding to support their vital work, and by working together, we create a more comprehensive safety net for children and families.

As a CASA Manager, I play a pivotal role in supporting children who have experienced abuse or neglect by ensuring that each child receives the dedicated advocacy they deserve. I oversee a team of compassionate and trained CASA advocates who provide a consistent, caring presence for children during some of the

most challenging times of their lives. My role involves managing caseloads, offering guidance and support to volunteers, and collaborating with social workers, attorneys, and other professionals to ensure the child's needs are met. This may include securing a safe and stable home environment, access to therapy, or educational support. By coordinating these efforts and advocating for each child's best interests, I help ensure that they have the resources and support needed to heal, grow, and ultimately find a permanent, safe place where they can thrive.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the committee to adopt the -1 amendment that includes CASA programs and to pass the bill out of committee. By doing so, you will help secure vital funding for CASA programs, ensuring that we can continue our crucial work of advocating for vulnerable children who have experienced abuse or neglect. With the inclusion of CASA in this amendment, we can strengthen the child protection system and provide the support and resources children need to heal, grow, and thrive. Your support is essential to maintaining this critical service, and I ask for your commitment to passing this important bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.