

Submitter: Nina Grayson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

After a long career in child welfare policy & administration, I became a CASA because I have seen too many vulnerable children get "lost" in the child welfare system. Overworked case managers and attorneys often do not have the time necessary to spend with each abused or neglected child who is placed into out-of-home care to make sure that child's needs are being met and best interests are being protected. The responsibility of the CASA is only to the child, to make sure that their needs, concerns, fears, and hopes, are heard and receive the proactive responses they deserve. Whether a baby who cannot speak for himself, a young child who has been traumatized into silence, or an abused teenager who does not know how to make herself heard, it is a huge challenge for these children to advocate for themselves. A child's CASA provides a voice for each child, to speak for her in court, in case planning discussions with ODHS, and with providers of essential medical, educational and mental health services. VOCA funding is essential to the ability of CASAs across the state to continue their work advocating for and supporting children in out-of-home care, and coordinating with the many other agencies such as the Oregon Child Advocacy Centers and the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of VOCA funding to ensure that the CASA programs in Oregon can continue as an integral element of the program network that is critical to assure the safety and well-being of vulnerable children. PLEASE vote to adopt the -1 amendment to HB 3196 and pass the bill out of committee!