

Submitter: Sarah Johnson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

Good afternoon,

I am writing in support of the amendment to HB 3196 that would add CASA. CASA volunteers strive to reduce the length of time children spend in foster care while also keeping children's best interests at the core of all case decisions. CASA volunteers take the time to make sure each child served is having their academic, social, emotional, and physical needs met. CASA volunteers also help guide the child's journey to safe and stable permanency through fact-based recommendations to the court.

Having an independent volunteer member of the community in the courtroom is a priceless resource. Where caseworkers are often overburdened, CASA volunteers can focus on one case at a time. Where attorneys are constrained to represent their client's wishes, even if those wishes may not be in the child's best interests, CASA volunteers can share unbiased observations and recommendations with the court. Where we see turnover in caseworkers and attorneys, CASA volunteers remain assigned to the case for the duration of the case. Research has shown that children with a CASA volunteer assigned to their case often do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and have better stability in their foster placements. On average, they also spend less time in foster care, have access to more resources and services, and are less likely to come back into foster care than children without a CASA.

CASA programs across Oregon felt the impact of losing VOCA funding and we are incredibly grateful to the State of Oregon for stepping up to ensure that this vital program remains healthy and active in every county across the state. Please adopt the -1 amendment that includes CASA programs and pass the bill out of committee.

Thank you,
Sarah Johnson
Executive Director, Yamhill County CASA