

Submitter: Jennifer Mylenek  
On Behalf Of: CASA of Jackson County  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

The Jackson and Josephine Counties CASA programs ensure children under the care of Child Welfare due to abuse and/or neglect have an advocate to ensure they are not lost in an overburdened and under manned system. CASA volunteers work with children to ensure their well-being, including medical, dental, mental health, and educational needs. CASAs provide well-researched and first hand reports of the child's circumstances to the court for child-focused decision making. No one else provides this information to the judge. CASAs visit children in their placements, at school, attend doctor visits, graduations, birthdays, and more. CASAs are also the first person to visit the child in their placements or when they move to a new home, which happens in 70% of the cases. Children birth to 21 often credit their CASAs for being the one person in their lives who was consistent and ever-present. VOCA funding allowed our dual county program to serve 100 additional children in the first year alone. We were able to increase our program staff by one FT FTE who manages 30 CASA volunteers and their over 100 child cases annually. Without this critical funding, we will have to postpone recruitment and training and service to those 100 children. I hope you will join us in supporting this bill and ensuring Oregon's children have a voice and an advocate as they journey through the complicated child welfare and court system.