

Submitter: Dana Thompson
On Behalf Of: CASA for Children of Klamath County
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196
February [DATE], 2025
House Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Legislature

Dear Chair [Last Name], Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Thompson, and I serve as the Outreach & Operations Coordinator for CASA for Children of Klamath County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3196 and the urgent need to sustain VOCA funding for CASA programs.

Right now, the child welfare system is under immense strain. With the current attorney shortage, attorneys are struggling to cover all the cases, carrying heavier caseloads than ever before. Many of these attorneys are handling cases from outside our county, making it even more difficult for them to meet with children in person. This reality makes CASA advocacy even more critical. CASA volunteers ensure that no child in foster care is overlooked or unheard. They visit children regularly, build trusting relationships, and provide the courts with vital, first-hand insights that overburdened attorneys may not have the capacity to gather.

VOCA funding allows our CASA program to recruit, train, and support volunteers who stand in the gap for these children. Without this funding, our ability to serve would be significantly compromised, leaving even more children to navigate the system alone. CASA programs work in close partnership with Oregon's Child Advocacy Centers, the courts, and other child welfare organizations that also rely on VOCA funding. Without it, the entire system will face an even greater crisis.

I urge you to adopt the -1 amendment to HB 3196, ensuring CASA programs remain included, and to pass the bill out of committee. Our state's most vulnerable children need us to take action.

Thank you for your time and commitment to this issue.

Dana Thompson
Outreach & Operations Coordinator
CASA for Children of Klamath County