

My name is Howard Kenyon and I am testifying concerning HB 3196. I'm a retired minister and nonprofit executive, but today I'm speaking out on a passion my wife and I share – but she leads in.

When Kim and I retired and moved to Salem nearly two years ago, she said she wanted to volunteer her time helping children in need. She does so now as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), giving several hours a month to help a child navigate challenges in life no adult, let alone any child, should experience.

Kim is this child's Number One advocate. As a CASA, she spends time with this child, listens to everyone involved in that child's life – including parents, resource families (foster parents), and case workers – and recommends to the judge what the child needs for safety and a permanent home, advocating for appropriate decisions in a timely manner.

Kim and I have been involved in supporting children who have experienced abuse or neglect for years. In her 50s, my wife went back to school to complete her Master in Social Work degree from Portland State. Since then, she's run school wraparound programs for children in need and we've served as respite foster parents. Through our faith community, we have supported numerous nonprofit ministries that help children facing serious challenges to achieving success in life as healthy independent adults.

CASA plays a pivotal and unique role in a much larger network focused on helping our own Oregonian children in need. We truly believe it takes a village – our entire village, including private citizens, communities of faith, nonprofit organizations, government family services, and the courts – to bring the supportive safety net these children need. VOCA funding plays a critical role in helping our Oregon village do this critical job.

In her current role with CASA, Kim volunteers her time. She receives no compensation. But she can only assist this child with the fully engaged help of the very capable CASA staff here in Marion County. Without the VOCA funding that provides this staff, her volunteering would have to stop. And this child would be on her own facing these monumental challenges.

I ask you to **adopt the -1 amendment that includes CASA programs and pass the bill out of committee.** Help Kim keep helping this child.

Sincerely,

Howard N. Kenyon
Salem, Oregon