

Feb. 7, 2025

To the Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing on behalf of House Bill 3196. I urge you to support the passage of this Bill as it has a direct impact on our most vulnerable children and youth – those who have experienced neglect and abuse from their primary caregivers. The adults who are supposed to be the most caring and trusted person in a young person's life have provided the exact opposite.

When reported, these youth end up in court-appointed foster care. Often this leads to multiple foster care placements and case workers assigned to this child's life over the course of the next months and years. The one constant adult in this youth's life is the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer. This CASA is responsible for providing support, encouragement, and works towards rebuilding trust – one adult at a time. This CASA appears in court proceedings as an advocate for the best living situation for this child, once they have had time to listen, get to know, and better understand the life of this individual child.

VOCA funding is critical to our ability to serve child victims of crime in Central Oregon. The loss of VOCA funding would result in a significant reduction in the number of volunteer CASAs serving children. This would have terrible implications for the children who need an advocate the most.

On behalf of thousands of children in foster care that need a trusted, individual advocate that knows them personally, I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 3196 out of committee.

Sincerely,

Jim Boen
32 year educator and CASA Board member