

Submitter: Tari Donohue
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3196

I serve on the Board of CASA of Central Oregon as an 'advocate' member because I'm also an advocate - my husband and I both are.

When cases come to me, the child(ren) are already placed in foster care, and the foster parents welcome CASA input and encouragement. It's also a great way to see how the children are doing in care, and keep up with parents' progress in services assigned to qualify for having their child returned to their care. It's not always an easy assignment, but it's been shown that children who have a CASA spend less time in the foster care system.

VOCA funding is so essential to staffing to support the CASAs and to train new volunteers. 80% of the children in care in Crook, Jefferson, and Deschutes counties have a CASA assigned to them. That is a great ratio, but not one that is consistent with other areas in Oregon.

We fundraise constantly to meet staff salary and support requirements for caring and advocating for children in foster care. The support of VOCA funding is welcomed as a 'backbone' of funding - it's a great relief to know it is a part of the larger financial picture for each CASA chapter.

CASA programs are part of the larger system designed to protect children – my work complements the other entities who also rely on VOCA funding like Oregon Child Advocacy Centers or the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

As a board member but more importantly as an advocate, I am asking that you adopt the amendment that includes CASA programs and pass the bill out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration of this amendment.