

Submitted by: Sheila Nilsby
On behalf of: CASA of Marion County
Committee: House Committee on Judiciary
Regarding: HB 3196

My name is Sheila Nilsby and I have been serving as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Marion County since June of 2023.

As you are aware, children come into foster care after being greatly impacted by neglect and abuse (physical/emotional/sexual) often leaving them feeling vulnerable and unsure of what the future will hold for them. As a CASA, I come alongside a child (or sibling set) and advocate to the court and others for what is in the best interest of the child as they move through the juvenile court system. Standing in the gap for these children is important work - work that I am both happy and privileged to be a part of. But...the needs are great and there is more we can, and should, be doing to give Oregon's foster children the help and support they need and deserve.

CASA is part of a larger framework of departments and organizations put in place to protect the children of our state. And, as with groups like Oregon Child Advocacy Centers and the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, we rely on VOCA funding to be able to do our jobs as volunteers in our communities. CASA programs need to recruit, train and support volunteers like me so that we are knowledgeable and confident as we enter this important arena of advocacy for our state's most vulnerable citizens – kids in foster care.

This is why I am urging you to adopt without delay the -1 amendment that includes CASA programs and pass the bill out of committee.