



Oregon CASA Network
1631 NE Broadway St., #304
Portland, OR. 97232

www.oregonCASAnetwork.org

March 6, 2025

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Smith and Committee Members:

Court Appointed Special Advocates or ‘CASAs’ are extraordinary volunteers appointed by juvenile court judges to represent and advocate for the best interests of children experiencing foster care. A CASA’s unduplicated mission is to provide individualized support and best-interest advocacy for each child tailored to their unique needs. CASA volunteers develop trusting relationships with the child, creating stability, consistency, and emotional support during the challenges of being placed in foster care and throughout their journey of finding a permanent home.

CASA programs are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that recruit, train, support, and supervise CASA volunteers. Oregon has 19 local CASA programs, providing services in all 36 counties. Becoming a CASA involves learning about the court system, child welfare laws, effective advocacy for children in foster care, and community services. This requires local program staff expertise and oversight.

The Oregon CASA Network, or OCN, serves as the statewide nonprofit organization that coordinates public and private pass-through funds and provides training, technical assistance, and legal expertise for local CASA programs.

The primary source of financial support provided to OCN and passed through to local programs is located within the DAS budget. Several years ago, there was a lot of discussion about where the OCN funding should live because ODHS and DOJ are parties in juvenile cases. At that time, it was concluded that DAS could be a neutral home for these funds and OCN would be the best positioned and most efficient way to administer them.

DAS has been a wonderful partner to OCN, and we unequivocally support their budget proposal and especially appreciate the support of Meliah Masiba and Khela Singer. DAS has also streamlined grantmaking processes which allow us to keep our focus where it’s needed most: on our CASA programs and on the kids in foster care.

In the 2023-2025 biennium, OCN received \$5.9 million, and we are included in this year’s DAS budget at \$6.3 million. We are very grateful to be included at that level; however, it’s not enough to prevent programs from running deficits or reducing services. This is because of increased living costs and the costs of benefits, as well as inflation.



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Oregon state law mandates that every foster child be appointed a CASA. Due to limited resources, over a third of foster children do not have a CASA. With the increase to \$7 million, we can avoid stagnating or regressing and can instead make meaningful progress toward serving more kids who deserve a CASA by their side.

CASAs are a sound and impactful state investment. Programs vary widely, but in one program as an example, a state investment to pay \$45,000 for one supervisor results in an equivalent of \$70,000 of volunteer time to help 60 foster kids with every aspect of their life. This is replicated across the state.

OCN and our local programs support the DAS budget and respectfully request that Court Appointed Special Advocate programs be funded at \$7 million within HB 5002. Thank you for your time and support.