

Submitter: Sarah Shipley
On Behalf Of: Yamhill County Court Appointed Special Advocates
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5014

Our children are our future. We are fighting for their future on so many fronts currently: education, welfare, safety and others, that every \$ we can use to bolster that support is critical. I fully support HB 5014 and the critical services for vulnerable children funding.

I'd like to add my support for HB 3196 which aims to backfill lost federal VOCA funds. Our local CASA program is well on it's way to having enough trained and supported advocates to ensure that every youth entering care receives the added support of a CASA from start of the case, we have fewer than 10 unrepresented youth right now. For the average 150 youth in care in our county each year (and many of these are long-running cases) this means the voice of a well-trained advocate supports the youth and provides an additional edge for that youth. CASAs are THE person in the court room charged solely with best interests of the youth. With this growth to meet the needs come mandated paid staffing requirements imposed by the state and national groups to ensure responsible business and training standards are met. That means paid staff of 2 or more FTEs is required to support the 50+ volunteers needed to provide advocacy for these youth. Our programs count on the support of our communities and from the state to help fund these programs. Our program has been serving youth as a 501(c)3 non-profit for 30 years now, Our children are too important a resource to waste and these youth can and do succeed when receiving needed services as they navigate childhood traumas. Please support the \$3M for Court Appointed Special Advocate programs included in this bill. Having volunteered with CASA for 17 years (and counting) these are dedicated volunteers pulled from all walks of life with many teachers, counselors, and parents volunteering tirelessly to give these youth a voice and a productive future.

Until you have volunteered with an organization like this, you don't realize how many people donate hours and sweat equity to these efforts. When I first started, I had no idea that so much support infrastructure was donated; how many critical tasks are performed by volunteers not people paid to be there -- people giving back to their communities and paying it forward. We work very closely with the local Oregon Department of Human Services paid staff as well as local support groups such as Juliette's House and Victims of Domestic Violence support groups with shared referrals, partner projects and more with groups all working to save our most vulnerable youth.

Your support for these programs is vital to developing our citizens of the future -

educated, knowledgeable, independent thinking, civic-minded and socially aware.
Please help us all keep the forward momentum.