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Support for HB 5014 and HB 3196

April 16, 2025

Honorable Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 5014 and highlight another important bill - HB 3196. These bills are vital to ensure child victims of abuse and neglect have the support services needed to heal. HB 3196 specifically will ensure that CASA programs across Oregon receive the stable funding in the upcoming biennium. I am here today to speak not only as a survivor of child abuse and witness of domestic violence, but as a passionate advocate for all children who need a voice in the system.

I grew up in a home plagued by child abuse and domestic violence. From a young age, I was trapped in a cycle of fear, confusion, and isolation. My home was not a place of safety or security; it was a place of harm. When I was 16, after years of enduring abuse, I fled to escape the trauma. I found myself lost, homeless, and without any idea of how to protect myself or navigate the complex and intimidating legal system.

It was then that I found a trusted adult who helped me find the safety and protection I so desperately needed. They not only helped me understand my rights, but also guided me through the legal process, ensuring my voice was heard and advocating for my safety. This person gave me the strength to keep going, to believe that there was hope, and that there were people who cared enough to help.

Without the unwavering support of a trusted adult, I am not sure where I would be today, but because of the support, I now serve as the Executive Director for CASA of Lane County, serving the county with the second highest child maltreatment rate in our state.

But CASA programs are only possible through dedicated volunteers and adequate funding. The reality is that these programs are at risk without stable and sustained funding. If we don't act now, we risk losing the very lifeline that supports vulnerable children and families like mine. These children need someone who will speak for them, someone who will walk with them through the legal system, ensuring their best interests are prioritized. CASA volunteers provide that support, but they cannot do it alone. We need the resources and infrastructure to be able to continue this vital work.

HB 3196 is crucial to ensuring that CASA programs have the funding they need to operate effectively, so that no child ever slips through the cracks. With your support, we can guarantee that CASA services remain available for the 65% of children around the state who are currently supported through the powerful voice of best-interest advocacy. These programs are critical to ensure children are able to heal, grow, and thrive.

I urge you to pass these bills so that other children—children who may be in the same situation I once was—can have the protection, support, and guidance they deserve. We owe it to them to provide the resources that will help CASA programs continue to thrive and support the most vulnerable children in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kendra Jones
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