



April 17, 2025

To the Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 5014. I urge you to fully fund HB 5014 and HB 3196. Both bills support critical services for children in Oregon who have experienced abuse and/or neglect.

I am the State Director of Oregon CASA Network (OCN). OCN is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides training, technical assistance, and legal support to Oregon's 19 Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs, serving all 36 counties. OCN also serves as the statewide coordinating entity for pass-through funds to CASA programs.

CASA programs recruit, train, and support CASA volunteers. CASA volunteers provide best-interest advocacy for foster children in the dependency process on their path to a permanent placement. CASAs not only speak up for foster children in court, but they help connect them to court-appointed services that support their overall well-being, including behavioral and physical health and education. CASAs form unique and stable bonds with foster children during times of so much uncertainty and upheaval.

CASA services are state mandated, yet only 65% of foster children in Oregon have a CASA. CASA programs depend on state funding to ensure they have the staffing and infrastructure to recruit and supervise volunteers. Given a lack of sufficient state funding, CASA programs must fundraise to fill the gap, which requires the investment in staff resources and time, and creates instability.

HB 3196 provides \$18.5M in one time funding to backfill lost federal Victims of Crime Act funds. This bill will provide \$3M to CASA programs in Oregon. This funding is critical to CASA programs' ability to serve child victims of crime in Oregon. The loss of VOCA funding would result in a significant reduction in the number of volunteer CASAs serving children. This would have terrible implications for the children who need an advocate the most. For

example, the loss of even one CASA supervisor would mean the inability to supervise 30 CASAs who would otherwise serve 60 foster kids. The lack of funding through HB 3196 would have devastating consequences.

CASA programs collaborate closely with Children's Advocacy Centers, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs, Campus Sexual Assault Programs, and District Attorney Victims Assistance Programs. Together, we are all part of the comprehensive system of responding to victims of crime.

Thank you for your time and consideration. In closing, I respectfully ask you to fully fund HB 5014 and HB 3196. Oregon's children depend on it.

Best Regards,

Kat Hendrix

State Director

Oregon CASA Network