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State Representative  
District 23

MEASURE: HB 4082  
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SUBMITTED BY: Rep. Jim Thompson



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
900 COURT STREET NW H-388  
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Testimony on CASA in Oregon  
HB 4082 2-6-2012

The Court Appointed Special Advocate program is a critical part of this legislature's recognition that children in Oregon are special and deserve additional attention.

The program is an invaluable service to at risk children. So much so that the legislature has given special immunity to the advocates, has given the courts additional authority to have individual representation for these children, and we have appropriated funds that are distributed to the counties to implement the CASA programs.

Why are we here today? We are still trying to figure house where to house this program. Last year, I sponsored HB 3012 to address the "home" of the CASA program in Oregon State government and to ensure continued funding to the 30 county CASA programs.

For the past several years, the CASA program was located within DHS, Commission on Children and Families. A Blue Ribbon report issued by the Commission on Children and Families on May 25, 2010 stated that the OCCF had determined that the 'maturity' of the CASA program indicated it 'no longer needed to be housed' in the OCCF. Last year we eliminated the Commission and CASA became homeless again.

After consulting with numerous agencies, we, the legislature chose to locate CASA in the Commission on Volunteers. We also appointed a task force to look at a permanent house for CASA. After a second round of discussion with many of the same agencies, the cost of a new home with the effective oversight, administration and education of CASA's - \$250,000 to \$800,000 a biennium - the agencies including judicial, indicated they would prefer not to undertake the program notwithstanding the importance of the programs to our children.

We need to have a permanent home for CASA that would:

- administer the CASA program to meet the directives of ORS 419A.170;
- To provide funds, establish standards, provide technical assistance and support to local CASA organizations.
- Provide training and facilitate ongoing education for CASA volunteers to ensure appropriate training and screening in consultation concurrence and cooperation with local agencies
- To receive grant applications, to make rules to govern the grant process for the award of funds to local CASA agencies
- To apply for and receive gifts and grants from any public or private source.

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- Award grants from funds appropriated by the Legislative Assembly to the commission or from funds otherwise available from any other source, for the purpose of carrying out the duties of the commission.
- Award, monitor and evaluate performance of contracts.

Continued:

Passage of this bill is a step forward in that direction. Providing a permanent home, not creating a foster child to bounce around, is the ultimate goal.

Our next step is to accept that, yes a good state oversight and administration of CASA does cost. The benefit is worth the investment in our kids. Adequate funding also insures that the state's investment in CASA -the special immunity to the advocates, and the courts additional authority to have individual representation for these children, and we provides the highest return we can get for our children with good oversight training and technical assistance to our local programs.

Please vote yes for the dash 3 amendments.