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Please Support SB 741 A

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The Oregon CASA Network - a collaboration of the local CASA programs that recruit, train, and support volunteer advocates for children under juvenile court supervision because of abuse or neglect. The Oregon CASA Network supports Senate Bill 741 A. In 2104, 1,850 CASA volunteers advocated for 5,135 children in the child welfare system, many of whom are in foster care. CASA's primary goal is to advocate for safe, expedient permanency for children, which may be adoption, guardianship or return to a parent. About 16% of the cases that closed last year in Oregon ended in adoption.

The passage of SB 741 A is a necessary step to ensure that permanency decisions will be based on the individual needs of each child rather than on an assumption that, in all cases, children are best placed with relatives regardless of the child's relationships with important adults.

As a general rule, CASA recognizes the critical role family plays for children in foster care. The opportunity to be raised by extended family is often the very best alternative for children who have suffered the loss of their birth parents. That is why CASAs advocate for early identification and engagement of family members as well as early placement with relatives for children who can't live with their parents. However, engaging relatives in early case activities can be challenging for DHS caseworkers who are focused on reunification services and visitation for parents or maintaining stable foster placements. In the mean time, children often develop important attachments to non-related foster families. In those cases, decisions to remove children from what are often the only parents they have ever known in order to place with relatives they may have never met should involve careful consideration of the impact of ending that relationship as well as the benefit to being raised by kin.

Narrowly defining children's permanency needs to exclude consideration of families to whom they are attached but not related by blood is unfair to the children CASA serves. SB 741 allows DHS, providers, and advocates to approach individual adoption decisions in a way that takes into account that particular child's needs rather than always preferring relatives, regardless of emotional relationship.

The Oregon CASA Network supports the passage of SB 741 A

Mission: Strengthen CASA Programs in Oregon.

Vision: CASA Programs will have sustainable resources to advocate for all children who are victims of neglect and abuse in Oregon.