

HB 2568 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Prepared By: Addie Smith, Counsel

Meeting Dates: 4/24

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to review the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer programs, 2018 CASA Program Evaluation Report, and the differences in operations between CASA volunteer programs in different counties based on the differences in Department of Human Service and court practices by July 1, 2020. Requires DAS to report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and on any recommendations for operational best practices and standardization by September 15, 2020.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are volunteers appointed by courts to advocate on behalf of children in juvenile court dependency cases. They investigate, examine, and advocate for the best interest of a child in order to help the court make decisions that promote safety, permanency, and well-being for that child. In Oregon there are 23 local CASA programs that recruit, screen, train and support CASA volunteers in jurisdictions across the state. Currently, across the state, Oregon CASA Programs provide a CASA to about 40 percent of eligible children.

In 2018, DAS commissioned an independent third-party evaluation of Oregon CASA Programs performed by Public Knowledge. The purpose of that evaluation was to provide analysis and recommendations to help DAS and the Oregon State Legislature make decisions about the future of Oregon CASA Programs. The evaluation looked at the strengths and opportunities of Oregon CASA Programs' service delivery model, the optimal governance structure and placement of the program within state government, and the ideal funding distribution structure. Ultimately, it found that:

"The State of Oregon and Oregon CASA stakeholders should fully implement, fund, and maintain a statewide affiliated nonprofit. It should have CASA expertise to support the Oregon CASA Programs. The State should play a limited funding and oversight role. Under this governance structure, one statewide nonprofit organization would provide program support and technical assistance to the 23 independent nonprofit CASA programs. Key characteristics of this model include:

- Local CASA programs remain independent 501(c)3 organizations within a statewide network, accountable to local boards.
- Local CASA programs continue to be accountable to National CASA Association (NCASAA) standards.
- The State acts solely as a funding agent and does not provide any program support or oversight to the individual programs.
- State funding is passed through a state agency to the statewide nonprofit organization, which then acts as an administrative funder to distribute to the local CASA programs.
- The affiliated nonprofit has oversight of local CASA programs' expenditure of state funds, and is then accountable to the state agency.
- Thirty-seven states structure CASA programs in this manner, with variances in implementation."

HB 2568 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Bill 2568-A requires the Department of Administrative Services to study CASA Volunteer Programs and review the 2018 Public Knowledge CASA Program Evaluation Report then make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly to address operational concerns and inconsistencies by September 15, 2020.