



March 1, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

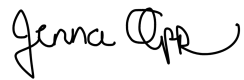
The Oregon CASA Network supports HB 2918 and 2925. Without the passage of the bills before you today, the vision behind HB 4052 will not happen. While HB 4052 was much welcomed, the initial legislation did not adequately fund the pilot project aimed at addressing health disparities, nor did it allow the time needed for focus groups so that the voices of those impacted could be heard in order to plan for interventions that would be both culturally relevant and impactful.

The Oregon CASA Network supports the 20 local CASA (“Court Appointed Special Advocate”) programs in Oregon that advocate for children and youth in the foster care system. The Oregon CASA Network is actively striving to reduce bias in the child welfare arena, and recognition of racism as a public health crisis is an important part of this dialog. Children of color, particularly Native American children, and Black children, enter the foster care system at disproportionality higher rates than their non-BIPOC counterparts. This troubling statistic is an example of structural racism that impacts socio-economic levels, access to education and health care, environmental and housing conditions, discrimination in employment and so many other factors known as the social determinants of health. The health consequences of factors attributed to structural racism include higher rates of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, less favorable birth outcomes, and disproportionate levels of involvement in the child

welfare system. Reaching for health equity requires nothing short of an upstream public health approach.

The common goal we believe we all share is for an equitable society where all people and communities thrive, and children are able to grow up within healthy families. Effective interventions, informed and led by those most impacted, require the funding and time commitments provided in the current proposed legislation. The Oregon CASA Network urges the Oregon Legislature to approve HB 2918 and HB 2925.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenna App". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenna App
State Director
Oregon CASA Network