



Good morning, Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee, my name is Jenna App and I'm the State Director of the Oregon CASA Network. I just moved from Deschutes County to NE Portland, and I appreciate the spirit and intention of these traveling hearings.

I'm here this morning asking that you continue to fund court appointed special advocate programs in Oregon. This year alone, the 19 local nonprofit and one Tribal CASA program will serve approximately 4,800 Oregon children who have experienced abuse or neglect. We are mandated by law to be appointed when the court determines a child to be in immediate threat of serious harm. Our programs serve children and families in all 36 counties.

In 2021, this body increased funding to CASA programs for the first time in 15 years and put in place a series of new requirements including allowing DAS to delegate oversight of CASA to the Oregon CASA Network. We've spent the last 2 years focused on creating one of the strongest CASA networks in the nation, including building and implementing a learning management system to allow equitable access to information about dependency courts, the child welfare system and trauma informed advocacy for children.

We are asking for \$6.4 million to fund the next 24 months of court appointed advocacy for some of the most at-risk children in the state. We are not alone in asking for this support; funding CASA is a top priority of the 2023 Children's Agenda, a coalition of 100+ partner organizations of Our Children Oregon that work on issues that impact children and youth. Because of the unique role of volunteers within CASA, for every dollar of public funding we receive, CASA essentially puts more than \$2 worth of time and work back into the child welfare system. We are perhaps the most efficient state mandated program. This becomes particularly evident when you look at the benefit to a child who has a CASA:

- A child with a CASA is more likely to receive all court-ordered services,
- is less likely to re-enter the child welfare system after his/her/their reunification with family, and
- is more likely to stay in school.

Please allow us to continue our essential service to children and families. Thank you for your time this morning.

Jenna App, State Director, Oregon CASA Network