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Dear Ways & Means Committee members,

My name is Najla Slater and I am on the board for CASA of Douglas County.

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 two years focused on creating one of the strongest CASA networks in the nation.

CASA's structure leverages state funds into a force multiplier. Each paid staff can support 30 unpaid volunteers who, in turn, advocate for 60+ children. In 201 CASA volunteers provided 200,995 hours of service to children. At the Independent Sector's estimated volunteer rate of \$29.95 per hour, equating to more than \$6 million in volunteered services.

Courts rely on the impartial perspectives of the trained and supported CASA volunteers. More than 93% of judges report positive overall experiences with CASA. Oregon law mandates that every child in foster care must be assigned a CASA. Without adequate funding and more volunteers, local CASA programs cannot meet the mandate- leaving half of the children in care without the consistent presence of a CASA volunteer.

We are asking for your continued support of \$6.4 million to fund the next 24 months of court appointed advocacy for some of the most at-risk children in the state of Oregon.

Please allow us to continue our essential service to children and families. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Najla Slater

I am for the child™

Our mission is to provide children who have been abused or neglected and are now in foster care, with qualified, compassionate advocates who will fight for and protect children's fundamental right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the safe embrace of a loving family.