

Good morning, Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee, my name is Maranda Calkins. I am the program Manager of Harney County with CASA of Eastern Oregon. I live in Hines, Oregon. I greatly appreciate this effort by the committee to hear us out on important matters.

I am here today with my request that our state allot the \$6.4 million dollars to fund Oregon CASA programs so that my program, CASA of Eastern Oregon, can continue to maintain its service to children in Malheur, Baker, Grant, Harney, Lake, and Union counties. In addition to each program in the state providing nearly \$100 thousand (or more) worth of volunteer hours each year and being one of the most efficient state-mandated programs, I also have some personal reflections to share as to why I believe in the value of CASA.

As a youth, I grew up bouncing back and forth between my mother and father. Most of my youth was spent locally, in Harney County. I grew up on the same streets, with the same houses, and see the same needs. I took on the role of CASA Manager to utilize my childhood trauma experiences by speaking on behalf of the children desperately needing a voice. I am passionate about helping children find who they are as a person, both who they want to be and don't want to be. Our program reaches not only the children in foster care but also the children in our community looking for a healthy outlet. We as a community need to stand by our youth and lead them by example, show them what life beyond abuse and neglect can look like. I see where I came from, and I know the battles I have fought to get where I am today – we need to continue to advocate for these children and we need your help to do it. Leading by example is the strongest proven way to inspire others, please allow us to continue our essential service to children and families. Thank you for your time today.

Maranda Calkins, Harney County Program Manager, CASA of Eastern Oregon