



**CASA of Eastern Oregon, Inc**  
(Serving Baker, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, and Union counties)

April 26, 2023

Co-Chair Senator Steiner  
Co-Chair Representative Tawna Sanchez  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Re: SB 5506

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Members of the Committee:

I am a volunteer with CASA of Eastern Oregon, and live in Burns, Oregon. I appreciate this committee's efforts to give those of us in Eastern Oregon an opportunity to be heard.

It is critical that the Oregon Legislature funds Oregon CASA programs at \$6.4 million so that my program, CASA of Eastern Oregon, can maintain and enhance services to children in Harney, Malheur, Baker, Grant, Lake, and Union counties. CASA programs in Oregon provide nearly \$100,000 (or more) worth of volunteer hours each year and are one of the most efficient state-mandated programs. I want to share with you reasons why CASA programs in Oregon are critically important to the safety and success of Oregon's foster children.

I served as Harney County District Attorney for 29 years. During that time, I handled child dependency hearings in our county. I personally saw the important role that Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) play in the child dependency system. After my retirement in 2020, I became a CASA Volunteer in Harney County because I wanted to continue to help children in my community. Advocating for the best interests of children who have been neglected, physically abused, sexually abused and/or emotionally abused places CASA's in a crucial role. Frequently CASA's are the one, unbiased voice who can tell the court the history of the child and what that child needs in order to be safe and successful. I know from talking to Circuit Judges throughout Oregon that they heavily rely on CASA's and listen carefully to our recommendations. CASA's live in the children's communities, working with community partners to ensure that services are being provided and that needs are being addressed.

\$6.4 million is a small investment in Oregon's future, especially when compared to the cost to the state in caring for those who are unsuccessful survivors of Oregon's frequently failed foster care program. The costs to house, to medicate, to provide therapy and/or to incarcerate those children who are not successful in foster care easily exceeds our requested budget amount by many millions of dollars.

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**April 25, 2023**  
**Co-Chair Sen. Steiner**  
**Co-Chair Rep. Sanchez**  
**Page 2**

Please invest in the future of Oregon and enable CASA programs across the state to continue to perform the vital work of advocating and caring for children who are dependent on Oregon for care, custody and supervision.

*Timothy J. Colahan*  
Timothy J. Colahan  
CASA Volunteer  
CASA of Eastern Oregon