



## Mission Statement

The Mission of the CASA program is to provide trained advocates for abused and neglected children who are dependent on the juvenile court to ensure their right to a safe and permanent home.

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## Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

All donations are tax deductible. CASA needs and appreciates the support we receive that allows us to advocate for the most vulnerable children in Klamath County. For every \$1200 raised, CASA provides full advocacy for a foster child for one year. Tax ID #: 93-1261640

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Dear Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and Members of the Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Public Safety,

We submit this testimony in support of HB 5014, which is essential in ensuring continued funding for services that protect Oregon's most vulnerable children. As leaders of CASA for Children of Klamath County, we see firsthand the impact of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds and the crucial role they play in advocating for foster children who, without the children's CASA, would have no one consistently fighting for their well-being.

### ***The Reality of Foster Care Instability***

One particularly heartbreaking case involved **six young siblings, ranging in age from 2 to 11 years old**, all impacted by the instability of the foster care system. While one of the children has been in guardianship with a relative the entire time, the relative was unable to take in all six. Two of the siblings have also been placed with another relative, who is still navigating the complicated process of obtaining guardianship.

The remaining three siblings have endured severe instability, bouncing from home to home, experiencing a total of **21 placements** between them. **One child alone had nine placements**, another had **seven**, and **another five**, with some stays lasting as little as **five days** before being uprooted again. These repeated disruptions have caused deep emotional distress and have made stability nearly impossible for these children.

**For nearly a year, these six siblings had not been together**, making their separation even more painful. The children's CASA stepped in to coordinate sibling visits, ensuring these children could maintain their bond and connection despite being spread across multiple placements.

But the involvement didn't stop there. **When one of the siblings was subjected to abuse allegations in a foster home, there was no available placement** for them. In that moment of crisis, the children's CASA became a temporary placement, personally housing and caring for the child to ensure their safety. The children's CASA provided shelter, food, emotional support, and advocacy, standing beside them through the interviews, setting up for CARES evaluations, ensuring their trauma was acknowledged, and ultimately supporting their transition into a safer foster home.

***This is what VOCA funding makes possible—CASA stepping in when no one else can, ensuring no child is left abandoned in uncertainty.***

### **Our Work with Partner Agencies**

The children's CASA does not work alone. We collaborate with essential agencies across Oregon to provide comprehensive care, including:

- **The Klamath Tribes** – Ensuring that Native children receive care that respects and aligns with their cultural heritage, maintaining strong connections to their community while ensuring the tribe's wishes are heard and honored in each case.
- **DHS (Department of Human Services)** – Working to involve children in their own case processes while collaborating with DHS and foster families to enhance protections and improve outcomes for children in care.

- **CARES** – Requesting evaluations to gain expert insight into a child’s experiences, ensuring appropriate interventions and support services are in place.
- **The District Attorney’s Office** – Advocating for children who are victims of crime, ensuring justice and protections are prioritized in legal proceedings.
- **Local Colleges** – Partnering to advance research, provide training for CASA volunteers, and support educational initiatives that strengthen advocacy efforts.
- **Public Schools** – Collaborating to safeguard children's educational stability, ensuring placement changes do not hinder academic progress or disrupt critical support systems. As well as maintain the children in sports and extracurricular events.
- **Therapists and Mental Health Professionals** – Coordinating care to address trauma, provide emotional support, and ensure foster children receive the mental health services they need to heal and thrive.

Every agency we work with is overwhelmed by caseloads, resource limitations, and the growing need for services. The children’s CASA helps bridge the gaps, ensuring these children receive the attention and advocacy they desperately need. But without VOCA funding, CASA programs across Oregon will face devastating cutbacks, leaving countless children without a stable advocate.

***How CASA Saves the State Money***

1. **Reducing Time in Foster Care**
  - Foster care costs Oregon an estimated **\$30,000 per year per child**.
  - Children with a CASA advocate spend **roughly 7.5 months less in foster care** on average, translating to **thousands of dollars in savings per child**.
2. **Improving Placement Stability**
  - Every placement change costs the state in administrative fees, caseworker hours, and new resource allocations.
  - CASA ensures more stable placements, reducing disruptions and eliminating unnecessary moves that strain state resources.
3. **Preventing Costly Future Involvement in Social Services**
  - Foster children without advocates face **higher rates of homelessness, incarceration, and unemployment**, all of which place a financial burden on state assistance programs.
  - CASA advocacy leads to **better educational outcomes and stronger support systems**, reducing long-term reliance on state services.
4. **Supporting Guardianship & Adoption**
  - CASA advocacy helps facilitate permanent placements through guardianship or adoption, avoiding continued foster care costs and reducing court fees associated with prolonged dependency cases.

VOCA funding directly enables CASA programs to **serve more children**, ensuring **not only their well-being but also substantial financial savings for the state**. Investing in CASA means investing in a **cost-effective, life-changing solution** for Oregon’s most vulnerable children.

***A Call to Action***

We urge you to fully fund HB 5014 and support HB 3196, which seeks to backfill lost VOCA funding. The \$3 million allocation for CASA programs is not just a number—it is an investment in the lives and futures of Oregon’s most vulnerable children.

Imagine being a child caught in the system, with no stability, no consistency, no one fighting for you. That is the reality for so many children CASA serves every day. Without funding, more children will experience broken placements, more abuse will go unnoticed, and more siblings will be permanently separated.

We cannot let this happen.

Please pass HB 5014, protect CASA programs, and ensure that every foster child in Oregon has a voice, a support system, and a future filled with hope—not uncertainty.

Thank you for your time, your dedication, and your commitment to protecting Oregon’s children.

Respectfully submitted,

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