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## **OREGON CASA NETWORK ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW CEO Debra Gilmore Named Chief Executive Officer**

**Portland, OR – September 18, 2018** -- Oregon CASA Network (OCN), a non-profit organization that supports all local Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs statewide, today announced the appointment of Debra Gilmore as Chief Executive Officer.

"The Oregon CASA Network is a trusted voice for abused and neglected children in Oregon, and both the board and the search committee agreed that Debra is the right person to promote CASA's unified voice on the issues impacting Oregon's children and families," said Heather Murphy, Board Chair, Oregon CASA Network. "Debra is a dedicated child welfare professional and recognized thought leader with impressive capacity-building experience. She is already moving us forward on our path to serving every child in need of a CASA's powerful advocacy."

The mission of the Oregon CASA Network, together with its local member programs and the National CASA Association, is to strengthen CASA programs in Oregon and ensure each program has sustainable resources to advocate for all children who are victims of abuse and neglect in Oregon.

Throughout Oregon, more than 11,000 children are in foster care on any given day. Gilmore's appointment corresponds with OCN's mission-driven vision of providing high quality volunteer advocates to represent every one of those children in child abuse and neglect proceedings.

Today, more than 2,000 Oregon CASA volunteers serve more than 5,000 children, but approximately 6,000 more children are without an advocate. Oregon CASA Network is working with partners across Oregon to close that gap and ensure the highest quality advocacy on behalf of Oregon's most vulnerable children.

Early in her career, Gilmore had the honor of serving as a CASA volunteer. Today she brings more than 25 years of experience strengthening child and family welfare to OCN.

She holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law and a Master of Public Administration degree from University of Nebraska at Omaha, and she is a certified Project Management Professional.

Gilmore has contributed to the protection of children through direct services, state and federal policy analysis, child welfare agency legal representation, and national consulting and capacity-building services, and previously oversaw child welfare and self-sufficiency operations in Hood

River, Wasco, Sherman, Wheeler and Gilliam counties as a district manager for Oregon's Department of Human Services.

She was a 2008 recipient of a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Adoption Excellence Award, has been published in and served as a content reviewer for the *Protecting Children* journal, and has been published in American Public Human Services Association's professional magazine, *Policy & Practice*.

"We know traumatic childhood experiences create long-term negative impact on a child's health and well-being well into adulthood. CASA volunteers play a vital role in limiting those negative impacts. I'm honored to represent this mission-driven program in Oregon, which ultimately contributes to Oregon's prosperity," Gilmore said.

Children in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be trafficked, and experience higher rates of incarceration and homelessness as they enter adulthood. CASA volunteers are game-changers for these traumatized youth – making it substantially less likely that they will languish in long-term foster care, more likely that they will have better educational outcomes, and helping everyone in an overburdened system remember that these are kids trying to grow and develop like other kids.

As CEO, Gilmore will help promote and strengthen the 23 local CASA programs throughout Oregon that recruit, train, and support more than 2,000 volunteers advocates for more than 5,000 children placed in foster care, helping judges make informed decisions about the children's best interests so that they experience safety, permanency, and the opportunity to thrive.