**PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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**Federal Community Project Funding Loss Underscores Needs of Foster Children**

CASA programs in Oregon face difficult decisions due to a loss of $1.7 million in federal funding. In the continuing resolution budget passed by Congress on Friday, March 14, 2024, all community project funding from the FY 2025 budget was eliminated. The Oregon CASA Network was slated to receive a $1,700,000 earmark to support 19 Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs advocate for children in foster care in Oregon.

CASA programs have historically received Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding; however, this funding source was eliminated in past years. The goal of the community project funding was to allow CASA programs in Oregon to continue serving children while also developing a more permanent solution to funding challenges. Now the loss of federal funding puts advocacy for children in foster care in peril.

“Cuts to community project funding in the federal spending bill now leave CASA programs facing difficult decisions that will directly impact our ability to advocate for children and youth in foster care due to abuse or neglect,” said Kat Hendrix, Executive Director of the Oregon CASA Network. “CASA volunteers do a very challenging job to advocate for children in foster care. They are trained and supported by professional staff members. Losing this funding will mean that most CASA programs will not have sufficient funds to support the people already doing this important work, let alone expand to serve more children.”

Every 30 CASA volunteers are supported by one staff member. Each volunteer advocates for one child or sibling group in foster care. Losing just one staff member in a CASA program could result in as many as sixty children or more not receiving best-interest advocacy that supports their path of finding a safe, permanent home and their overall well-being.

“CASA volunteers make a huge impact for children,” says Hendrix. “Having the consistent support of one trusted adult dramatically decreases the impact of adverse childhood experiences which has life-long positive results. Children and youth in foster care are at risk of losing this benefit that so dramatically improves their lives.”

There are two bills being considered by the Oregon State Legislature this session that could have a positive impact for CASA programs in Oregon. HB 5002 and HB3196 have both received bipartisan support.

“I encourage every Oregonian who cares about children in foster care to contact their local legislator,” says Hendrix. “Children and youth in foster care are depending on us.”

**About Oregon CASA Network**

Oregon CASA Network, an affiliate of the National CASA Association, is the statewide organization supporting Oregon’s 19 local CASA programs.

The mission is to support and unite local CASA programs to promote volunteer advocacy on behalf of children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect by:

* Promoting awareness of Oregon’s CASA programs, CASA volunteers, and children who have experienced abuse or neglect.
* Supporting local program offices (capacity-building, training, technical assistance, collaboration, pass-through funding).
* Working with the National CASA/GAL Network to support strategic expansion and development of CASA programs.

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