

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2015

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Russell 304
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Hart 503
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

We respectfully urge you to fully fund the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in fiscal year (FY) 2016. This program is critical to the 238,000 children in the child welfare system who have CASA volunteers appointed on their behalf. Over sixty percent of children in foster care still need CASA advocates, and this funding will help bring CASA programs closer to the national goal of serving every abused and neglected child.

CASA programs assure that a specially trained volunteer is able to represent the rights and needs of an abused or neglected child as his or her case is being considered in the court system. The volunteers are appointed by judges to their most difficult and complex cases, because the volunteer dedicates sustained, long-term attention to the child's needs, with demonstrated improved outcomes for the children for whom they advocate.

The CASA program is a modest federal investment which leverages the time, energy, and compassion of over 75,000 volunteers across the country to bring about real results for abused and neglected children. Children who languish in the foster care system without a safe and permanent home face long odds for success. They have more difficulty in school, are more likely to have substance abuse and mental health problems, and are more likely to be involved in the juvenile and criminal justice system than their peers. CASA volunteers help to ensure that children find safe and permanent homes and have access to the services they need to succeed.

CASA advocacy also demonstrates good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. A child with a CASA volunteer is far less likely to re-enter the child welfare system. Every child with a CASA volunteer saves the taxpayer significant dollars, compared to the cost of keeping a child in care, because they are working to move these children safely out of the foster care system.

These are difficult times that require difficult choices. Funding the CASA program, however, is fiscally responsible. We urge you to fully fund CASA in FY 2016.

Sincerely,



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



KELLY A. AYOTTE
United States Senator



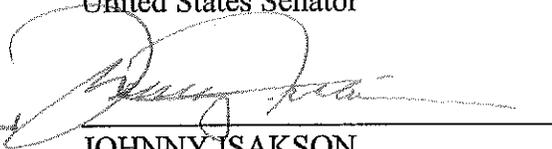
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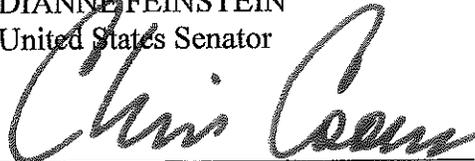
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United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator



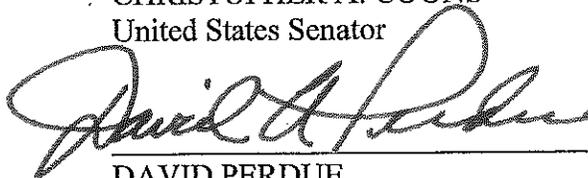
JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



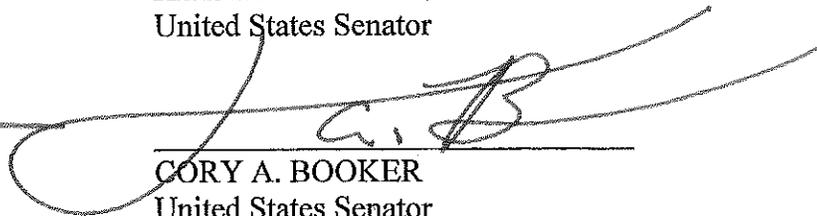
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



DAVID PERDUE
United States Senator



CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator



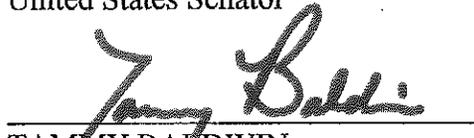
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RON WYDEN
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator