

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Capitol, Room 128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Capitol, Room 146A
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Committee, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
125 Hart Senate Office Building Washington,
D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Shelby and Ranking Members Leahy and Shaheen:

We respectfully urge you to fully fund the Department of Justice's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. This program is critical to the more than 280,000 abused or neglected children who have highly trained and dedicated CASA advocates appointed on their behalf, and to the 402,684 child victims who are still waiting for the presence of a consistent, caring adult to speak for their best interests in the courtroom and the community. This funding is critical to improving outcomes for every abused and neglected child, as was the Congressional intent when the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 was enacted.

CASA programs across the country provide specially trained and supervised advocates who devote sustained, long-term attention to the needs and rights of child victims of abuse and neglect. Judges appoint CASA advocates to their most difficult and complex cases to watch over and advocate on behalf of the best interests of abused and neglected children, to make sure they do not get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. In addition to providing direct services to child victims, CASA program funds are used to ensure that every child receives the highest possible quality of services and care through national training, program standards, technical assistance, and resources that utilize evidence-based and trauma-informed practices.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that the number of children in foster care has drastically increased since 2012, which many state child welfare agencies are attributing to children impacted by the national opioid crisis. This has created a higher demand for services to be provided by highly trained CASA advocates. Children who languish in the foster care system without a safe and permanent home face diminished chances for success. Abused and neglected children often experience several layers of trauma and face multiple risk factors including juvenile and adult delinquency, sex trafficking, homelessness, substance use disorders, mental health issues, teen pregnancy, and lower academic achievement. Nearly 87,000 CASA advocates across the country seek to change the trajectory of these children's lives, in part with Congressional support. Local CASA programs – supported through state offices across the country – utilize this critical funding to deliver dedicated advocacy on behalf of abused and neglected children in communities nationwide.

CASA advocacy also demonstrates a good investment of taxpayer dollars. A child with a CASA advocate is more likely to be placed into a safe, permanent home and far less likely to reenter the child welfare system. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates the economic and social costs of child abuse and neglect to total \$124 billion nationwide. Research shows that the presence of a caring, consistent adult for a youth in foster care is associated with improved adult outcomes.

Although we certainly understand the challenges our current budgetary situation presents to the committee, CASA is fiscally responsible and we urge you to fully fund the program in FY 2019.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator




Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



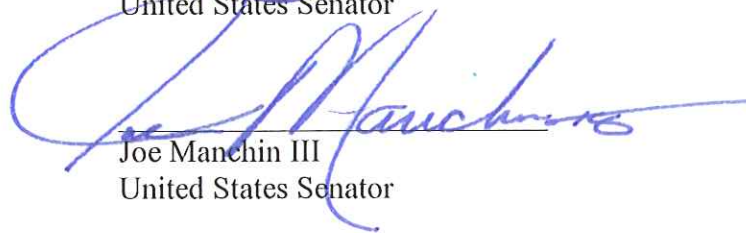
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



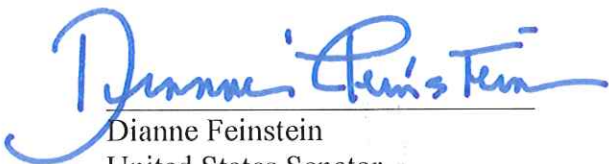
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



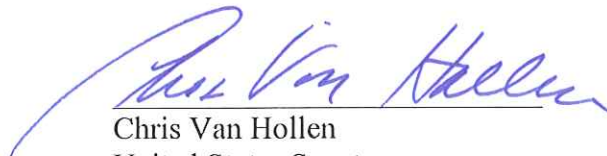
Tina Smith
United States Senator



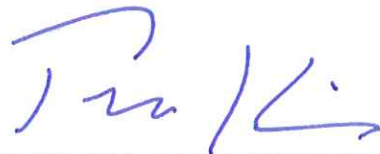
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



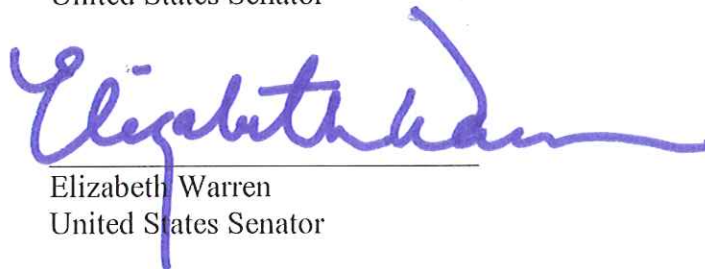
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



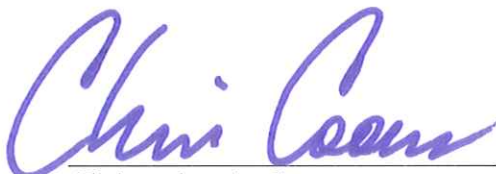
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



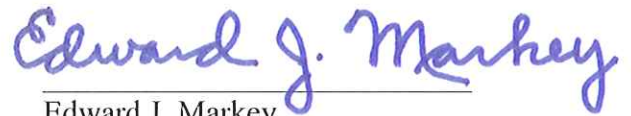
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



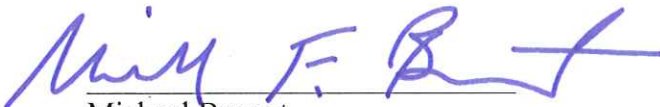
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



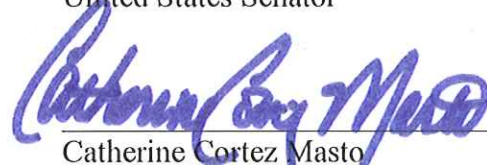
Michael Bennet
United States Senator



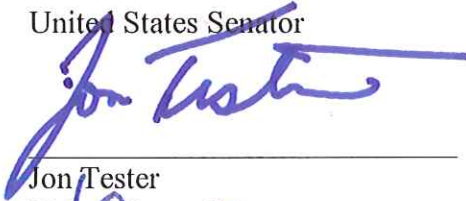
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator




Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



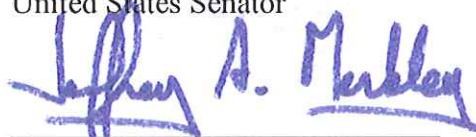
Jon Tester
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



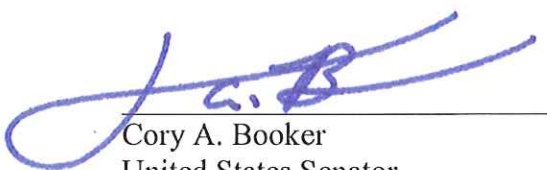
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator