

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2019

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 Chairman Shelby and Moran and Ranking Members Leahy and Shaheen:

We respectfully urge you to fully fund the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. This program is critical to the 260,000 abused or neglected children who have highly trained and deeply dedicated CASA advocates appointed on their behalf, and to the over 400,000 child victims who are still waiting for the presence of a consistent, caring adult to speak for their best interests in the courtroom and in the community. This funding is critical to improving outcomes for every abused and neglected child, as was the intention of Congress when it enacted the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990.

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 trafficking, homelessness, substance use disorders, mental health issues, teen pregnancy, and lower academic achievement. Nearly 85,000 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 2020.

Sincerely,



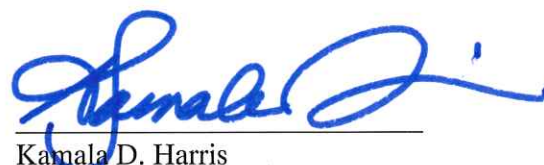
Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



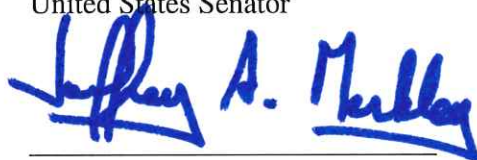
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



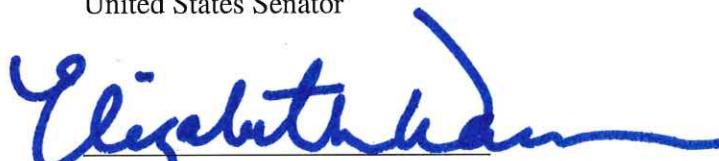
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



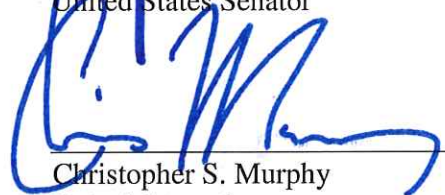
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



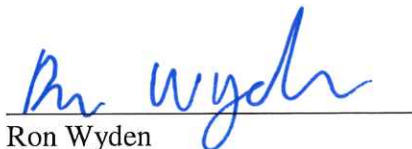
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



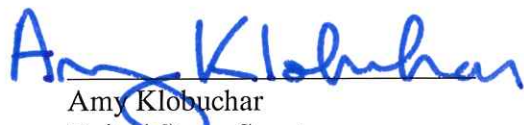
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



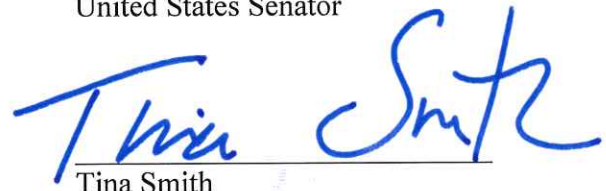
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

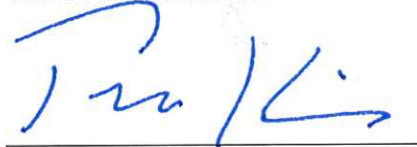


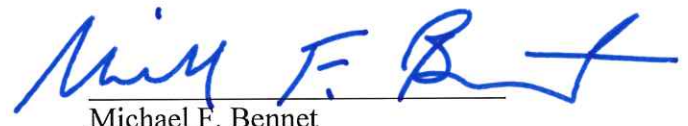
  
Edward J. Markey  
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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator


  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

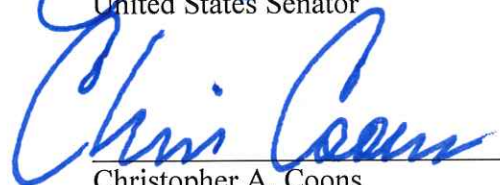
  
Tim Kaine  
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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

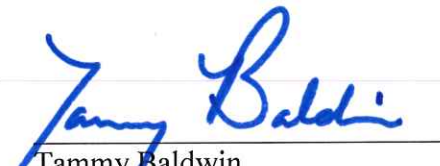
  
Bernard Sanders  
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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

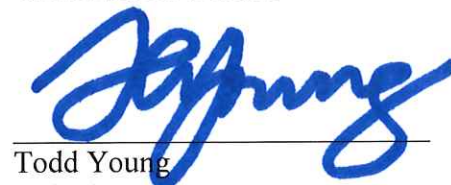
  
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

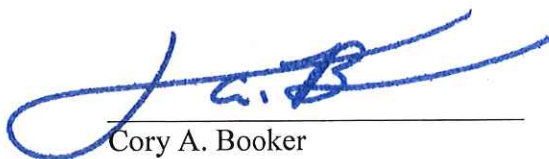
  
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

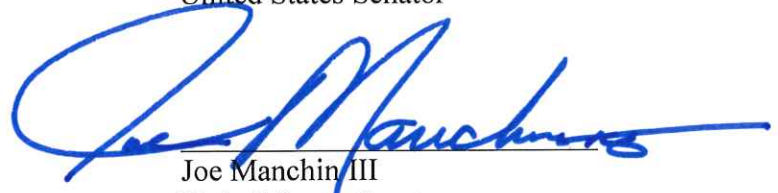
  
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

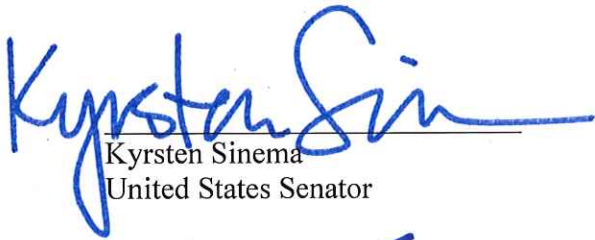
  
Tammy Baldwin  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

  
Todd Young  
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Cory A. Booker  
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Joe Manchin III  
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Kyrsten Sinema  
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Richard J. Durbin  
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Jon Tester  
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Maria Cantwell  
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Mark R. Warner  
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