

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

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

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Capitol, Room 146A
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 142
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 125
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairwoman/Ranking Member Mikulski:

We respectfully urge you to fully fund the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in fiscal year (FY) 2017. This program is critical to the 251,000 abused or neglected children who have highly trained and deeply dedicated CASA advocates appointed on their behalf, and to the 451,000 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 citizen-advocates to assure that the needs and rights of our most vulnerable victims are met. Judges appoint CASA advocates to their most difficult and complex cases because the individual dedicates sustained, long-term attention to the child's needs. 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.

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, homelessness, substance use disorders, mental health issues, teen pregnancy, and lower academic achievement. More than 76,000 CASA advocates across the country seek to change the trajectory of these children's lives, in part with Congressional support. Local 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 good stewardship 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 re-enter the child welfare system. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently 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.

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 2017.

Sincerely,

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



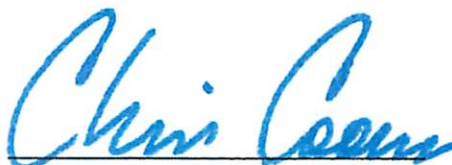
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



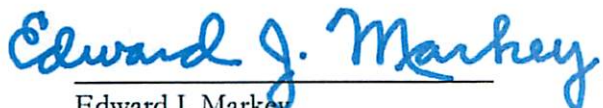
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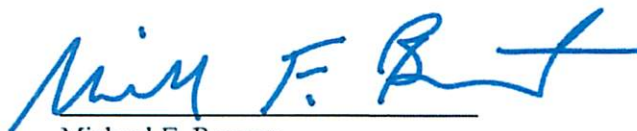
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