

August 26, 2021

Ms. Nicole Hoyt  
Town of Boscawen  
116 N Main St  
Boscawen, NH 03303



Dear Ms. Hoyt,

We need your help to provide victimized children of Boscawen a voice during a difficult and trying time in their young lives.

**I am writing today to ask the Town of Boscawen to consider an appropriation of \$500 during your next funding cycle to advocate for your town's most vulnerable children.** The Town of Boscawen's support will allow CASA of NH to expand our recruitment efforts in your community in order to provide more children with CASA volunteer advocates who need their help. Last fiscal year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021) **our CASA volunteer advocates spoke on behalf of 8 children living in Boscawen.** Although we are now serving more children than ever our mission is not complete. Because of the higher numbers of children coming into the court system primarily due to the opioid epidemic that continues to plague our state and COVID-19 pandemic taking a toll on our country, we had to refuse 5 new cases from Merrimack County, or 6 children total. During FY 2021, we had to refuse 45 cases, totaling 81 children.

Since 1989 CASA of NH has been helping abused and neglected children in our state by giving them a voice in our family courts – a voice that is provided by a caring adult volunteer advocate. CASA of NH is the only nonprofit organization in the state to recruit, screen and train volunteers to advocate for victimized children. CASA volunteers live in every corner of our state. They are compassionate and hard-working members of our community who care about the safety, wellbeing and futures of over **1,400 children across our state** who have experienced the hurt and confusion that comes from living in an abusive or neglectful household.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of NH's children, especially those who are the victims of abuse and neglect. Without the eyes of teachers and other caring adults, these children have suffered in silence for over a year. They have spent less time with people who are normally in positions to support and report (educators, social workers, administrators, counselors) and their social circles have contracted to include only family members, often the very ones who are perpetuating the cycle.

Parents are facing increased stress regarding care for their child while working, confronting economic instability and job loss, and feeling even more food and housing-insecure. For these reasons, CASA of NH anticipates a surge in reports of neglect and abuse cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning this fall, in the 2022 fiscal year, once schools and community settings are completely re-opened.

Our advocates and staff did not falter when the world had to shift focus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hundreds of vulnerable children went without a CASA volunteer before the COVID-19 pandemic, and we were determined not to slow down our recruitment process. With no foreseeable end to the pandemic, we have now pivoted to a virtual onboarding process, and are conducting virtual information sessions for those who are interested to learn more about CASA and our volunteer opportunities. Potential advocates can apply online and CASA staff will reach out to schedule a virtual interview. Our training team has created a completely virtual training experience through Zoom and Google Classroom that has been praised by participants for its "necessary training, discussion, role play, and coaching that is vital to preparing advocates for this role."

CASA of NH has been working closely with leaders from the Judicial Council, DCYF, Health & Human Services, Granite State Children's Alliance, and other state and local organizations and child-focused non-profits to

determine next steps and strategies for keeping children safe. The impact of the pandemic could have far-reaching implications for NH's children, but the full scope is yet to be determined. We are anticipating that the need for CASA volunteer advocates will be even greater than before. Your support will help to train and support these volunteers in order to meet the anticipated demand for our services in your area.

In addition to the hardships faced with COVID-19, we are continuing to see the effects of opioid and substance misuse within the families whose children we serve; 78% of new cases last year had a known Parental Substance Abuse Component. In addition to physical abuse and neglect, children have been trafficked for drugs, witnessed their parents overdosing (and in some cases dying), and some have been directly exposed to or have ingested drugs themselves. Abuse and neglect can have a tremendous impact on a child's lifelong health and wellbeing. By supporting CASA, you are making it possible for our advocates to continue to work diligently on behalf of children and families to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children in your town and across the state.

**New Hampshire's abused and neglected children are a part of every community within our state** and range in age from birth to 21. National studies show that children with a CASA volunteer benefit in countless ways -- they are more likely to be placed in safe, permanent homes, likely to receive better services, and more likely to have fewer placement changes than children without a focused advocate. With the support of a CASA advocate, neglected and abused children have access to a brighter future.

In addition to all of the good work they do for our children, our CASA volunteers also save our state more than **\$5.3M in legal fees** – fees that would otherwise be paid for by state tax dollars. Often family court judges will request a CASA volunteer advocate to provide services to an abuse or neglect case. If CASA of NH cannot provide a volunteer, the state will then hire a paid GAL (Guardian ad Litem) at \$60 per hour plus travel costs.

Below are our most recent fiscal-year-end statistics specific to your city's county and our state:

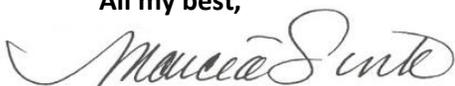
FY 2021 BY THE NUMBERS		<u>Statewide</u>	<u>In Merrimack County</u>
	<b>Children Served</b>	1,417	216*
<b>Volunteers</b>	628	107	
<b>Miles Traveled</b>	339,166	47,576	
<b>Hours of Volunteer Time</b>	88,859	14,223	
<b>Value of Volunteer Advocacy</b>	\$5.3M		

*\*This number includes 8 children from the Town of Boscawen.*

The work that the Town of Boscawen is helping us achieve has never been more important. **With over 78% of our cases stemming from parental or caretaker drug misuse**, the children our CASAs serve are the unseen victims of the current drug crisis. Your contribution can help to bring these children out of the confusion and into the arms of a loving family.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this request for your next funding cycle. Should you require additional materials to support this letter, please contact Tarah Bergeron, Development Assistant at (603) 626-4600 or by emailing [tbergeron@casanh.org](mailto:tbergeron@casanh.org). I look forward to updating you with our progress and the impact that your support will have on NH's victimized children.

All my best,



**Marcia R. Sink**  
**President & CEO**