



**The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association**

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March 17, 2016

The Honorable Eric D. Coleman  
Deputy President Pro Tempore  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Chairman  
General Assembly Judiciary Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 2500  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Re: Raised Bill No. 347  
*An Act Establishing a Program for Court Appointed Special Advocates in  
Certain Juvenile Court Matters*

Dear Chairman Coleman,

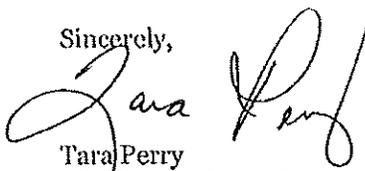
The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (National CASA Association) is writing in strong support of your Raised Bill No. 347 (the Bill), which effectively would establish a court appointed special advocates (CASA) program in the Connecticut Judicial Department so that court appointed special advocates may serve as a resource for courts in certain juvenile matters and advocate in the best interest of children in those matters. The Bill also sets forth other important provisions concerning, for example, program affiliation with National CASA Association and its rigorous local program standards and quality assurance, duties and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer, parameters for access to information relevant to a child's best interests, requirements for background checks for volunteers, immunity for volunteers and staff when acting in good faith and within the scope of their appointment or work and signaling that court appointed special advocates may continue to be appointed as guardians ad litem pursuant to Connecticut law.

National CASA Association, together with its state and local members, is a network of nearly 1,000 community-based programs that recruit, screen, train and support more than 76,000 citizen-volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms and communities. Volunteer advocates – empowered by the courts – offer judges the critical information they need to ensure that each child's rights and needs are being attended to while in foster care. Across our nation, more than 250,000 abused and neglected children have a caring CASA/GAL volunteer who advocates for them, protects their rights and ensures that they find their way to a loving home.

Your support through this Bill will help assure abused and neglected children in Connecticut reap the benefits of having a CASA/GAL volunteer in their lives. Public and privately funded studies show that a child with a CASA/GAL volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home, more likely to have appropriate services ordered, more likely to be adopted, half as likely to re-enter foster care, substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, have fewer placements while in care, and do better in school.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving outcomes for Connecticut's most vulnerable children. National CASA Association would urge timely consideration and passage of the Bill. We look forward to a positive legislative process.

Sincerely,



Tara Perry  
Chief Executive Officer