

Congressional Record Statement in honor of the inaugural “I am for the Child Day”

April 18, 2018

M. President, today I rise to recognize the first annual “I am for the Child Day” on April 18, 2018 sponsored by the Wisconsin Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association and the National CASA Association. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Wisconsin CASA champions the needs of abused and neglected children. Over 6,000 Wisconsin children are in foster care, yet only 690 are assigned trained volunteers who can advocate for their safety and wellbeing while under the protection of the courts and child welfare agencies. The goal of the 1st annual “I am for the Child Day” is to raise awareness about the need for volunteers and the crippling impacts of child abuse and neglect on vulnerable children. I am proud to honor the WI CASA organization and the dedicated volunteers whose voice can speak for these children.

The Wisconsin CASA Association is a charitable, nonprofit member of the National CASA Association network. The Association supports local programs throughout the state of Wisconsin in La Crosse, Vernon, Monroe, Brown, Marinette, Outagamie, Rock, Columbia, Dane, Manitowoc, Sauk, and Milwaukee counties. Court Appointed Special Advocates are community volunteers who champion the needs of abused and neglected children. They are sworn “Friends of the Court” acting under the jurisdiction of an appointing judge. Their work strengthens outcomes for children involved in an overstrained social welfare system. They provide advocacy for children’s health, safety, emotional and physical development, family interaction, education, faith, recreation and the cultural continuity that children need to thrive.

These volunteers interact with parents, caregivers, siblings, extended family members, foster parents, teachers, counselors and health care providers to monitor the children’s educational progress and social development. Their observations ultimately cultivate important recommendations for the court. Research shows that CASA volunteers strengthen outcomes for children, enhance child safety, reduce time spent in foster care and improve the services the children receive.

CASA organizations are accelerating their advocacy by designating April 18 as the first annual, “I am for the Child Day” with the goal of bringing awareness to child abuse everywhere and to help these children navigate a tumultuous life experience. Once again, I commend The Wisconsin Court Appointed Special Advocates Association on their admirable work, and look forward to celebrating their accomplishments in the future.