

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 18

BY SENATOR MIZELL

A RESOLUTION

To designate Monday, April 14, 2025, as Better Together-Children's Advocacy Centers and Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocate Day in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers and Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs have made valuable contributions to the state and have helped to make it a better place for children and families; and

WHEREAS, the month of April has been designated National Child Abuse Awareness Month, and studies show that one in ten children will experience sexual abuse before the age of eighteen; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers provide services to over seven thousand children each year for cases involving physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and children who have witnessed domestic violence and homicide; and

WHEREAS, each year, over five thousand children in the state experience abuse or neglect, ushering them into dependency of the court and foster care services; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers reach over forty-five thousand professionals and community members annually through education and awareness efforts for the prevention, identification, and reporting of child abuse; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers is to provide every child victim with a comfortable, child-friendly environment for forensic interviewing, victim advocacy, mental health, and other services to reduce further trauma to the child and promote healing; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers work with multidisciplinary teams of child abuse professionals to coordinate child abuse investigations and interventions, including district attorneys, Department of Children and Family Services, CASA programs,

law enforcement agencies, mental health providers, and victim advocates; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers use evidence-based practices to support the well being of children, and research has demonstrated that these programs improve outcomes for children, reduce trauma for families, and save taxpayers' money; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers is the state chapter established for the empowerment, collaboration, and advocacy of Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers and provides a wide range of critical services to local centers; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers are a part of a network of nine hundred centers across the nation that serve over three hundred fifty thousand children annually, with eleven centers fully accredited with members in good standing with the National Children's Alliance and three centers on the path to national accreditation; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana CASA is the statewide association for the eighteen local CASA programs that raise awareness of the need for CASA across our state and provide support, training, resources, and oversight to maintain high-quality programs that serve children's best interest; and

WHEREAS, the mission of CASA is to give every child who is a victim of abuse or neglect an opportunity to thrive and establish permanence; and

WHEREAS, the local CASA programs work in courtrooms across all forty-two judicial districts and advocate for our state's most vulnerable children; and

WHEREAS, CASA programs in Louisiana, in association with the National CASA Association, speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers and Louisiana CASA serve a vital function on a daily basis to protect and advocate for Louisiana's most vulnerable population.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate Monday, April 14, 2025, as Better Together- Louisiana's Children's Advocacy Centers and Court Appointed Special Advocates Day in Louisiana and does hereby commend the dedication and excellent work of those agencies, their staff, and volunteers on behalf of the citizens of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers and the executive director of the Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocate.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE