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**CASA SHaW calls upon senators to support and pass childcare legislation**

Lebanon, NJ (September 23) – Court Appointed Special Advocates of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties (CASA SHaW), the leading nonprofit for assisting foster care children and families in the tri-county region, has called upon U.S. Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez to support and aggressively advocate for passage of childcare legislation in the U.S. Senate.

“The coronavirus pandemic has placed incredible financial and societal hardships on many of our foster youth and their families since March.  Many childcare programs were forced to close for a period of time, and while some facilities have since reopened, they are operating with decreased enrollment and increased financial instability,” said Tracey Heisler, Executive Director of CASA SHaW.

The Child Care Is Essential Act and the Child Care for Economic Recovery Act, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2020 but not yet voted on by the Senate, would inject more than $50 billion into the childcare industry, ensuring its survival throughout the pandemic.  Many industries across the United States have been provided financial relief by the U.S. government, but childcare providers have been woefully undervalued.

“The core of our communities are working families who are still going through much uncertainty with employment and now with childcare.  Not every family has the opportunity for parents and guardians to work from home, and we must address enhancing childcare funding through federal policies sooner rather than later,” Heisler said.

CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties is part of a statewide network of community-based, non-profit programs that recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers to “Speak Up for a Child” removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA is the only program in New Jersey that uses trained volunteers to work one-on-one with children, ensuring that each one gets the services needed and achieves permanency in a safe, nurturing home. To find a local CASA program in your county, visit [www.casaofnj.org](http://www.casaofnj.org).

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