

Dear Committee of Honorable Representatives and Senators,

I write on behalf of the local volunteers and citizens that comprise the Long Tom Watershed Council Board of Directors, a body elected by a very diverse membership involved with the local watershed council - farmers, foresters, NGO's, urban residents and more.

HB2516 captures a laudable goal, outdoor education for elementary students, however the Watershed Conservation and Operating Funds are not the appropriate source of funds and an added layer of bureaucratic procedure as proposed is not the appropriate mechanism.

This legislation proposed an end-run around the intent of Measure 76 as passed unanimously by every county in the state of Oregon, as well as an end run around fair processes that are in place through the competitive grant process for the Watershed Conservation Fund, and the funding priorities and decisions made by the OWEB Board, which is a inter-disciplinary, collaborative board with well-informed priorities from the state, federal and local levels.

Interestingly, watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts around the state are largely engaged in outdoor education programs for kids, as a natural and community-driven complement to their focused work on environmental health, for improved water quality, fish and wildlife habitat. Please support those efforts further, rather than this proposal. From a healthy environment perspective, where the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and Measure 76 both focus on near-term action with long-term results to address the documented need to upgrade Oregon's environmental systems, educating elementary school children is not the first action that is recommended. Outreach to adult landowners for immediate behavior change and landscape improvement is, by contrast, highly recommended as an absolute top priority, and that should be the focus, per voter intent and per existing community-prioritized programs.

From my own perspective, as a mother and a person that values education tremendously, I would like my daughters, who are now in classrooms of 31 children and experiencing increasing furlough days, to have those major learning impediments remedied before an outdoor school program would be proposed.

Sincerely,  
Dana Dedrick, mother, and  
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