

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT 47J

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March 6, 2013

Dear Representative Deborah Boone,

I am writing this letter in regards to HB 2516. This bill would take money from the Watershed Conservation Operating Fund and Watershed Conservation Grant Fund and provide it to schools for Outdoor School programs. I am in an interesting position working as a Principal and Curriculum Director for the Vernonia School District, and serving on the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) Steering Committee.

While I would be excited to receive specific funding for Outdoor School activities, I DO NOT want it to be at the expense of our local watershed councils. Our district's partnership with the UNWC is a strong one, and the OWEB-funded restoration projects they perform are critical pieces of our students' learning in the areas of science, sustainability and natural resources.

The projects performed in partnership with the UNWC, and other schools' partnerships with their local watershed councils, are on-going, connect students with local adults and professionals, expose youth to participating in solutions to local issues and help create life-long learners and citizens who are truly involved in making their communities better places to live. While Outdoor School is a part of Vernonia's overall Sustainability Program, it is in most districts a one-time, hit and miss science activity that is not supported in the classroom other than the week in which students attend. For Vernonia School District natural resource projects, the funding for outdoor, place-based, service-learning opportunities would be more effective, more sustainable and better served through the maintenance and sustainability of our partner watershed council.

In closing, my suggestion is to look to other funding sources to provide comprehensive Outdoor School funding for schools, and NOT take it away from already effective Watershed Council programs that are already serving our schools as effective educational partners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aaron Miller
Principal/Curriculum Director
Vernonia School District 47J

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