



*a non-profit for the future of sailing*

**OregonYouthSailing.org**

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To the Oregon Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Matthew Berger and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Youth Sailing Foundation (OYSF). Founded in 2007, Oregon Youth Sailing Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that aims to keep sailing alive and active in Oregon by making it accessible to young people, with a focus on those who otherwise would not have the opportunity to be on the water. The programs we support connect youth to the joy of sailing and the life skills and confidence it helps build.

Our flagship program is a summer Community Sailing Program specifically for youth from traditionally underrepresented communities in Portland. Since 2017, we have had tremendous success introducing over 300 youth to the sport of sailing and Willamette River exploration. Several of these participants continued their training during the school year and now are certified sailing coaches. OYSF supports this advanced job training as well.

Last year's Summer Learning grant from the Oregon Association Education Service District and the previous year's grant from Oregon Community Foundation have been crucial to the success of our program and the impact it has had on Portland Metro youth. We have been able to expand capacity significantly and plan further ahead than previous years. This means more youth reached and greater sustainability.

A shining example of our success was a teen named Ramses. An immigrant from Mexico, Ramses had never been on a river in Oregon and did not know sailing was even an option in his life. After attending one of our two week programs, he was hooked. He returned nearly every day after his program and helped other participants learn as a Counselor in Training. He is now completing US Sailing instructor certification and will be working as a paid sailing coach for this same program next summer.

Our call to action is not only to continue this funding and sustaining it in the future, but also to provide funding earlier in the year so that small nonprofits like us can plan ahead and scale up accordingly. Equity and improving access to Oregon's natural resources through sailing is our mission. Thank you in advance for helping us accomplish our goals!

Thank you,

Matthew Berger  
Executive Director, OYSF