



**Friends of Outdoor School**  
PO Box 82684 · Portland OR 97282  
FriendsofOutdoorSchool.org  
IRS TAX ID# 27-4657069

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April 19, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education  
900 Court St NE  
Salem OR 97301

RE: Support for full funding for Outdoor School

Dear Senator Frederick, Representative McLain, and Committee members:

Please join Friends of Outdoor School in supporting continued full funding for Outdoor School. Your support is critical to tens of thousands of Oregon youth, thousands of teachers, hundreds of school districts, and hundreds of people who work to provide this seminal program.

At Outdoor School, students in fifth or sixth grade leave their school classrooms, moving into the outdoors to learn, immersed in nature, and led by skilled educators. Students learn about natural resources, ecosystems, and themselves. Many students report that this is the most powerful week of learning in their K-12 schooling.

In 2016, voters overwhelmingly approved Measure 99 allocating a portion of Lottery funds to send every 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade student to a week of Outdoor School. Since then, over 150,000 Oregon kids have attended Outdoor School and the numbers are increasing every year!

This sustained investment since 2017 has had a huge impact:

- The numbers of students, schools, and districts who are participating in Outdoor School continue to increase. Stable funding is key to districts feeling comfortable committing to the program.
- Outdoor School instructors and program leaders have had the opportunity to deeply examine their programs with an equity, access, and inclusion lens to improve programming to meet the changing needs of students and districts.
- Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School has been able to conduct formal research into the benefits of Outdoor School to students. This information helps to also highlight areas of program strengths and areas for improvement.

**Our Vision: Outdoor School is a place where every child can belong.**

- Students have begun to have the opportunity to provide feedback about their experience. This information allows program providers to discover ways to better meet students' needs and the needs of their communities.
- A large part of the Outdoor School workforce has moved from low-paid seasonal jobs without benefits to professional, living-wage jobs with benefits. These employees are now exploring how to become more committed in their communities such as buying homes or planning long-term careers in Oregon. Most importantly, well-paid and well-educated instructors make the experience better for kids.

Friends of Outdoor School is the key connection between Outdoor School and the larger community of individuals, businesses, community organizations, and agencies that support Oregon's statewide Outdoor School system. Our purpose is to connect, support, and advocate for all of Oregon's diverse students to learn at inclusive and accessible Outdoor School programs that contribute to educational development, inspire youth, promote personal growth, and embrace justice. Our vision is that Outdoor School is a place where every child can belong.

Families across the state – rural, suburban, and urban - rely on Outdoor School to educate and inspire their kids to create a deep and enduring connection to Oregon and each other. Having the shared experience of Outdoor School is what it means to be an Oregonian. Please continue to provide full funding to Outdoor School to ensure a profound educational experience for all Oregon students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim Silva". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kim" and last name "Silva" clearly legible.

Kim Silva  
Executive Director  
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