



April 20, 2023

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

RE: Support for full funding for Oregon's Outdoor School program

"I was able to learn better at Outdoor School. It made learning fun. Over a computer, when I didn't mute myself, I would cough a lot just to get kicked off the Zoom meeting. But out here, I don't want to get kicked out. It's fun and makes me pay more attention. I have ADHD and at Outdoor School you're allowed to move around a lot, and the staff want us to move around a lot. In school I move around too much and I always have to sit back down. I'm not getting in trouble for moving out here. I'm gonna do better in school and hopefully get pushed forward a few grades so I can come back sooner. I want to be a student leader and help kids."
--6th Grade Student

Dear Senator Fredrick, Representative McLain, and Committee members:

Gray Family Foundation thanks you for your past support of Oregon's Outdoor School program. That support has enabled tens of thousands of students across our state to attend outdoor school, deepening their knowledge and connection to place and building a critical understanding of science content, concepts, and processes. Please join me in supporting continued full funding for the 2023-24 biennium for this valuable statewide program.

Gray Family Foundation, a supporting organization of Oregon Community Foundation, was founded on the belief that fostering an understanding and appreciation of the natural world is a crucial part of a child's education. Outdoor School provides students meaningful hands-on learning opportunities. Students gain confidence, develop relationship skills, and return from outdoor school with increased self-awareness – as well as critical math, science, and social studies instruction. Many students report that it is the most impactful week of learning throughout their K-12 grade experience.

Full funding from the legislature ensures that Outdoor School will consistently be part of every Oregon student's K-12 experience. The effects of COVID-19 sharply highlighted the structural inequities in our state and among our students. Outdoor School for all students is more important than ever. It is a critical way teachers build connections among their classes and engage students more deeply in learning.

Thanks to continued and stable funding, Oregon State University Extension Services Outdoor School has strengthened outdoor school programs. Their formal research, robust resources to assist teachers and program providers, and commitment to ensuring Outdoor School for ALL has led to consistent increases in participation and the delivery of higher quality programs.

Oregon's economy and future rely on supporting our next generation to develop the skills, knowledge, and motivation to protect the health of our communities and natural resources. Gray Family Foundation strongly supports a continued investment in Outdoor School as an essential experience for all students in Oregon. We support full funding from the Oregon Legislature for Outdoor School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Bales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Bales
Executive Director
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503-552-3505