

Date: 1/27/2025

Subject: Support for Legislation to Fund Oregon Summer Star Program for Veterans' Children

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I am writing in strong support of the proposed legislation to allocate funds from the General Fund to support the Oregon Summer Star program through the Tsuga Community Commission. As a parent with firsthand experience, I can confidently say that this program has been an invaluable resource for my children and many other families of veterans across Oregon.

My family has been fortunate to be involved with the Oregon Summer Star program for many years. My oldest child started attending when he was just 7 years old while his father was deployed. The experience meant the world to him during a challenging time, offering him a sense of community and connection that was deeply needed. He continued to attend OSS until he turned 18, and the impact of those years cannot be overstated. The camp provided not only a safe and supportive environment but also a lasting bond with other children of veterans, something that made a lasting difference in his life.

My two younger children have also been able to experience this wonderful program. My daughter is currently in her 9th year at the camp and always looks forward to it. She has shared that the camp environment is unique because she can connect with other kids who understand her experience as a child of a veteran. This bond is something that is not easily found in other social settings, and it has helped her grow both socially and emotionally.

The Oregon Summer Star program is a vital resource for the children of veterans, offering them not just fun and adventure, but also an invaluable sense of camaraderie and understanding. It's a safe space for them to express themselves, build resilience, and create lasting friendships with others who truly understand their unique experiences.

I wholeheartedly urge you to support the passage of this bill, as it would significantly benefit the families of veterans across our state. This funding would ensure that the Oregon Summer Star program can continue to provide these crucial experiences for our children, strengthening our communities and supporting the families who have given so much for our country.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. Your support would mean the world to many veterans' families.

Sincerely,

Rachel Downing

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