



To: Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
From: Kim Silva, Executive Director
Date: February 3, 2026
Re: Proposed cuts to Outdoor School funding

In June 2025, the Oregon Legislature approved a crushing budget that cut 20% of Outdoor School funding. This budget cut has significantly impacted over 500 Oregon schools, their Outdoor School program providers, and most importantly, over 38,000 students expecting to attend Outdoor School this school year.

I urge you to support HB 4112, introduced by Rep. Hudson and co-sponsored by 48 legislators (a fully bipartisan, bi-cameral support list). This bill will restore funding levels for Outdoor School to those that **voters intended with their overwhelming support for Ballot Measure 99 in 2016**.

In 2015, the Oregon legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 439, the Outdoor School law, entrusting the Oregon State University Extension Service with administering the grant funds designated specifically for K-12 public school students. In 2016, Oregon voters overwhelmingly passed Ballot Measure 99 to fund Senate Bill 439, designating 4% of Lottery revenue to fund Outdoor School for all Oregon 5th or 6th-grade students.

At Outdoor School, students learn in nature led by skilled educators. Oregon's Outdoor School program is one of the most expansive in the nation, serving approximately 85% of all 5th and 6th-grade students across diverse geographic, cultural, and economic communities. This scale is only possible through the work of dozens of providers, many of whom operate on lean budgets and carry limited capacity for program development, staff training, or community engagement beyond the immediate delivery of services.

The story of Outdoor School in Oregon is one of an educational program with a nearly 70-year history of success and achievement that is *unmatched*. Outdoor School works for Oregon kids.

Outdoor School is not a nice-to-have. Outdoor School is EVERY Oregon student's right, given to children by Oregon voters. Oregon school districts depend on and expect the Outdoor School funding approved by Oregon voters.

Due to the existing 20% cut:

- 9 school districts have already canceled their Outdoor School programs completely.

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- Tens of thousands of students are losing hours of field science education. This will have a detrimental effect on all students, most especially our state's most vulnerable students.
- School districts are struggling to find the funds to provide Outdoor School to their students with the most needs, especially students with disabilities.
- Hundreds of dedicated education professionals, most of them early in their careers without a financial safety net, have been laid off or have had their work hours reduced.
- Hundreds of community-owned businesses and nonprofits are losing their contracts to provide goods and services to Outdoor School programs, disproportionately impacting rural communities.

I urge you to support HB 4112 and reject any further proposed cuts to Outdoor School.

Sincerely,

Kim Silva
Executive Director

Friends of Outdoor School's 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.