



February 4, 2026

House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem Oregon 97301

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Dobson, Vice-Chair McIntire and members of the Committee,

My name is Catherine Alexander and I am the CEO and Director of Programs for Red Alder Outdoor Education. We're based in Salem and we provide outdoor school for elementary and middle school students in the Willamette Valley and throughout Oregon.

I urge you to approve House Bill 4112, which will restore \$6 million of the \$12 million that was cut from the outdoor school budget in 2025.

In 2016, more than 67% of Oregon voters across the state approved the Oregon Outdoor School Lottery Fund Initiative—also known as Ballot Measure 99. Measure 99 allocated 4% of lottery funds or \$22 million per year, adjusted for inflation, for a multi-day, immersive educational experience outdoors for every 5th- or 6th-grader.

When I, my family, my neighbors, and my colleagues voted for Measure 99, we endorsed this funding unconditionally. We wanted all Oregon students to be able to access this educational experience no matter where they lived, who was in office, or whether the state's coffers were overflowing or not. This is how important we felt it was. We still feel this way.

Despite this strong endorsement from Oregonians across the political, geographic, and socio-economic spectrum, last June, the legislature made the hard decision to cut 20% in voter-approved funding for outdoor school. As you can imagine, this disproportionately impacted students in rural and under-resourced school districts. Full funding would have equaled \$58.2 million for the biennium—an amount that was necessary for maintaining current service levels and delivering this program as voters intended.

Outdoor school is a powerful science literacy booster, an effective educational intervention for students struggling in traditional classroom settings, and super-charged, high-interest applied learning opportunity where students learn about the real world, in the real world. Oregon leads the nation in prioritizing outdoor education in this way and it's something we can all be proud of.

Given the challenges in our state's K-12 education system, Oregon students need and deserve the benefits and opportunities provided by outdoor school, now more than ever.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting HB 4112.

Respectfully,

Catherine Alexander