



March 30, 2021

Dear Co-chairs Frederick and McLain, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your leadership and support for Oregon's STEM Hubs. STEM Hubs have proved vitally important for Oregon youth and Oregon Outdoor Schools providing a framework for STEM education to improved access and success.

I respectfully urge your support for the \$5.4 million STEM investment in the Oregon Department of Education budget in SB 5513. By making investments in Oregon STEM Hubs, STEM Innovation Grants, and Oregon Pathways, this critical funding will help STEM Hubs and the programs such as Outdoor School that are part of these regional Hubs better serve students who have historically lacked access to STEM opportunities. Students of color, girls, students experiencing poverty, and rural students in particular benefit from the regional focus of the STEM Hubs.

The COVID pandemic has, as we know, made it extremely difficult to provide the types of learning experiences that STEM provides (hands-on, experiential, project-based). These impacts have disproportionately impacted students of color in particular. Now is an excellent time to reinvest in STEM opportunities as we navigate out of COVID and into recovery for Oregon youth.

We know that robust STEM learning experiences lead to better outcomes for students and better prepare them to fully engage in our democracy and economy—promoting critical thinking skills and career-related skills. STEM Hubs play a crucial role in supporting this learning across the state, while providing leadership, technical assistance and professional development especially in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Furthermore, more than 75% of the fastest growing professions require STEM skills. In the past 10 years, the growth in STEM jobs has been 3 times as fast as non-STEM jobs. The skills and mindsets developed through STEM – problem solving, critical thinking, adaptability, design thinking, communication, and professional skills – are exactly those skills that will help our young people thrive in a changing economy and build Oregon's economic well-being. Investing in STEM education today is an investment in Oregon's long-term economic well-being.

I know that there are many important priorities for legislative funding this biennium, including advancing racial and social justice, response to growing incidents of catastrophic wildfire, and, of course, recovery from the pandemic

Our Vision: Every Oregon student attends a week of Outdoor School.

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(including preparing for a better response to future public health crises). Strong STEM education in Oregon serves all of these priorities. Thank you for your consideration.

Most 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
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