



May 10, 2021

Bill Harvey
Commission Chair
bharvey@bakercounty.org

Senator Lew Frederick
Representative Susan McLain
Co-Chairs, Joint Ways & Means Sub-Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Mark Bennett
Commissioner
mbennett@bakercounty.org

RE: Oregon State University Extension Funding

Dear Senator Frederick and Representative McLain,

Bruce A. Nichols
Commissioner
bnichols@bakercounty.org

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the importance of the Oregon State University Extension Service youth programs, which include the 4-H Youth Development Program, KidSpirit, Outdoor School, SNAP-Ed, Open Campus, and Juntos. These programs provide for innovative positive youth development, research, and outreach.

OSU Extension provides critical access to youth across the state. In the past year, OSU Extension youth programs have served over 109,000 Oregon youth, across the state, through learning-focused, culturally responsive programs and resources. Program offerings and engagement strategies are continually adapted based on community input, needs, and current issues.

Oregon's 4-H program serves over 42,000 youth in every county through positive youth development, and another 32,715 youth were served through supplemental nutrition education. Six-thousand adult and youth volunteers help keep positive youth development thriving through hands-on learning and empowerment.

OSU KidSpirit serves 2,400 youth, ages 2-18, through year-round camps and out of school programming in arts, science, sports, and cooking. Employing 150 high school and college students throughout the state, OSU KidSpirit provides training in positive youth programming and experiential learning opportunities for developing professionals.

OSU Extension's Open Campus and Juntos program support historically marginalized students through culturally-relevant college access and community engagement programming. Juntos works with over 100 schools in

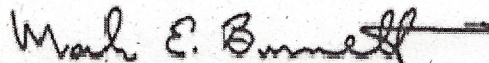
26 Oregon communities, has had over 5,200 youth and family participants with a 92% high school graduation and over 90% post-secondary education access rate.

While funded separately through Lottery dollars, the OSU Extension Outdoor School Program continues to dramatically increase participation and increase equity and inclusion for 5th and 6th grade students across Oregon. Despite the challenges of the current pandemic, the program has rapidly adapted to serve over 35,000 student this year, and delivered thousands of hours of professional development experiences to formal and non-formal educators who had to rapidly adapt to a new way of teaching and learning.

The Governor's recommended budget flat-lined current funding levels, which would erode current program service levels. Together, we support the request that funding be increased 7.42% from the 2019-21 budget to \$61.9 million in order to continue the essential work; now is not a time to cut programs that have such a powerful impact on our youth.

We recognize you have difficult decisions to make. We ask you to remember that maintaining the investment in OSU Extension will have a lasting impact on Oregon's young people and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Bennett" followed by a horizontal line.

Mark Bennett,
Baker County Commissioner