



January 24, 2023

Senate Committee on Education

Dear Committee Members,

I am here today to discuss school access legislation and ask for your support of SB 531 which would appropriate moneys from the General Fund to Department of Education for summer and after-school programs.

Girl Scouts of Oregon and SW Washington was a beneficiary of the funds this past summer and we were able to provide arts, social and emotional learning, outdoor and environmental education, STEM, mentoring, service learning and youth led activities that fostered community building and belonging for 16 weeks to over 3,000 girls in K-12 grade from throughout the state. A few things to note about how funding was used to help youth:

1. Funding allowed us to serve girls from communities where access to summer and after school activities are very limited. For instance, GSOSW's Puentes (meaning Bridges) Summer Program offers a culturally responsive introduction to Girl Scouting for children in Latina and underserved communities in partnership with community-based organizations and Migrant Education programs offered at school districts throughout the region. Curriculum includes STEM, healthy living, and arts learning experiences.
2. We saw an unprecedented amount of children struggling with behavioral problems, social development delays and mental health challenges this summer. Our programs helped fill a gap that would have made the start of the school year, even harder. While we aren't there yet, our efforts ARE helping. Access to quality, fun curriculum and supportive adult role models who have an interest in their social and emotional health has helped Girl Scouts in these programs build resilience and develop skills they need to help them in the classroom and with peer relationships. Knowing how to make a friend, handle stress, and manage conflict constructively, are all skills our kids missed learning during the pandemic. Extra practice outside the classroom has made them more ready for classroom learning.
3. Summer programs would have been canceled if funding had not been provided. There were significant hiring challenges this summer that made it difficult to hire qualified summer staff. Funding allowed us to increase wages, improve training and ensure we had the staffing we needed to serve the demand and keep kids healthy and safe. Parents were grateful to have quality options for day care.

Without future funds, we will not be able to continue to offer the same level of programming in the communities that have the least resources. Also, please note that timing is also critical. Without more time to build programs, develop partnerships, conduct outreach and hire staff, we will miss out on serving those who need it the most.

Please support Senate Bill 531 and get funds into our communities' sooner to help ensure we can meet the needs of those continuing to struggle within our inequitable systems. Please feel free to contact me at [severs@girlscoutsw.org](mailto:severs@girlscoutsw.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Evers".

## How Girl Scouts Benefits Girls

- Community-based organizations like Girl Scouts specialize in providing youth experiences in ways that enhance their potential and complement their in-class experiences. It is crucial that today's youth receive opportunities to develop skills and identify their interests in fields that will help them in their future lives and careers.
- Girl Scouts is the best leadership development experience for girls in the world. We are committed to ensuring that every girl has access to activities in science and technology, business and economic literacy, and outdoor and environmental awareness.
- Our Girl Scout Leadership Experience is a one-of-a-kind leadership development program for girls with proven results. It is based on time-tested methods and research-backed programming that helps girls take the lead—in their own lives and in the world.
- Girl Scout programming complements girls' classroom learning and has been correlated by grade level to state and national curriculum standards. Research from the Girl Scout Research Institute suggests that Girl Scout involvement influences girls' academic success. Girl Scouts are more likely than other girls to:
  - Earn "excellent" grades (53 percent vs. 45 percent)
  - Expect to graduate high school (88 percent vs. 83 percent)
  - Expect to graduate college (70 percent vs. 60 percent)
- Girl Scouts buffers girls against negative outcomes at a crucial time in their lives:
  - While it is common for a girl's sense of self to decline in middle school, Girl Scouts exhibit a slight lift in theirs during this time.
  - During middle school, non-Girl Scouts experience a dramatic drop in interest and involvement in their communities, whereas Girl Scouts' desires to solve problems in their communities increases.
  - Also during middle school, Girl Scouts remain confident about their futures, whereas non-Girl Scouts are more likely to question theirs.
- At Girl Scouts, girls find a safe space where they are free to be themselves without the pressures and social anxiety that can come from a mixed-gender environment. They can develop and practice different skills, try new things, and take on leadership roles with support from caring adult mentors and strong female role models.
- We hope you will support this legislation so Girl Scouts and other patriotic organizations can partner with schools, ensuring all students have access to high-quality after-school programs.