

Submitter: Melissa Singletary  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB531

Thank you for your support of summer learning in 2021 and 2022. We are grateful to have been the recipients of this funding for the past two years. It made a huge difference for our summer camp program at Camp Lutherwood Oregon (located in Cheshire, Or.) We offer 8 weeks of summer youth programming, providing 5-day, 4-night residential summer camp programs for 1st -12th graders. 2023 will be our 63rd summer. Historically, summer camp has only been for those with financial ability to cover camp fees and transportation to and from camp. We have been able to offer partial scholarships and limited outreach to marginalized groups, but have been limited by financial resources. As a small nonprofit organization, covering our costs for summer camp with fully paid camp registrations is often challenging. The summer learning grants made it possible to offer greater scholarships to many more campers from foster care, immigrant families, and more. We were also able to provide staff resources to developing relationships with organizations connected to underserved youth who could help them get to camp. As wonderful as it was for two summers, we know the work takes time and consistency. We have been able to dedicate a .25 time position to continuing outreach, but that is all we are able to fund at this time. We know that all kids need the chance to spend time outside, away from screens and often stressful family lives. Especially since COVID, we know that the social, emotional learning is essential and overnight summer camp provides the opportunity for youth to make new friends, live in community and spend time with positive adult mentors. Lastly, with the grants, we were able to hire a full time mental health specialist for our entire summer program. She was available to campers and our college-age staff, as well as a resource to families and parents who needed help finding resources. We would not have been able to fund that position without the summer learning grant and we also don't know if we can do camp without this position going forward. The need is so great for mental health support and we find these situations are presenting themselves at camp more often. We have barely scratched the surface of possibilities to offer a quality summer camp experience to many, many more underserved youth, but we need consistent funding to assist with this work. We will continue to do our part to find scholarships and partnerships, but we are limited in so many ways as a small nonprofit. That is why this funding is a game-changer for us and for our ability to serve many youth and families over the coming years. Thank you for your continued support of summer programs and for allowing kids to experience the magic of a week of summer camp.