



February 22, 2023

TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Our Children Oregon
RE: Support for HB 3037, Outdoor School Data Collection

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Wright, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families.

We support HB 3037 to ensure that all children in Oregon have access to the opportunity to attend Outdoor School. Participating in Outdoor School is a fantastic opportunity for children in Oregon to get out, build confidence, and connect to nature. According to Friends of Outdoor School, participation in outdoor programming significantly increases comprehension in STEM related subjects and overall student achievement, attendance, and comprehension.¹ Furthermore, according to the Oregon Health and Outdoors Initiative, spending time outdoors significantly decreases instances of obesity and diabetes, reduces blood pressure, and stress levels.² Outdoor School is often a child's first opportunity to hike in a forest, get their feet wet in a stream, or explore sea life along a sandy beach. Making Outdoor School programming available to all Oregonians is essential in promoting the health and well-being of students and their families.

When I was in middle school, my school provided me the option for the whole class to go to Outdoor School in the sixth and eighth grade. I think of that time very fondly. I went to both the Coast and Central Oregon and spent three days outside and in a cabin with my friends. I fell in love with nature and Oregon, and grew my curiosity, learning about composting, natural resources, and ecosystems. I never experienced that before. I always saw it on television— kids going to summer camp, doing archery, and canoeing on a lake— and I wanted to do that too, but my parents could not afford it. I want other kids, like myself, to have the opportunity to go to

¹ <https://friendsofoutdoorschool.org/why-outdoor-school>

² <https://www.healthandoutdoors.org/for-health-partners>

Outdoor School.

HB 3037 mandates the collection of essential data on Outdoor School attendance by allowing the Department of Education to work with Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School Program. This partnership ensures the following:

- **Equitable access to Outdoor School.** By analyzing data on who is and who is not attending, Outdoor School can support schools and work with local communities to ensure every student receives this important educational experience.
- **A proper examination of educational outcomes** to ensure that Outdoor School programs are meeting their intended educational goals.
- **An overall increase in quality** of Outdoor School programming by giving school districts the support they need to provide Outdoor School to students and meet their needs.

We thank you for your time and efforts to take the necessary steps to improve child wellbeing and whole-child experience, especially ensuring equitable access to Outdoor School Programming. We urge your support for HB 3037.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

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Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2023 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda