

Submitter: Sarah Kitting

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2717

Dear Oregon Legislature,

I am writing in support of HB 2717. I am the Executive Director of Healthy U, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Cave Junction, with a mission of serving the minds, bodies and hearts of the Illinois Valley. More importantly, I am the single mother of a three-year-old who attends a local outdoor preschool. I cannot stress enough the benefit outdoor preschool has on my son's life and well-being. Research has shown the importance of time in nature for physical and mental health, and time spent outdoors is especially vital for children and youth. Nature is the ultimate playground, and I have watched piles of branches turn into boats sailing the sea as the children look for treasure, observed puddles become ingredients for making tea, and witnessed imaginary gardens planted and tended in the dirt. Children at outdoor school, which meets rain or shine where my son attends, learn invaluable skills, such as being prepared for the elements, using teamwork to achieve common goals and how to identify local flora and fauna. Nature play also increases motor skills, reduces stress, and increases self-confidence. Specifically, passing HB 2717 would open previously unattainable funding streams and allow the school to extend hours of care for families in our highly underserved area.

Thank you,  
Sarah Kitting  
Executive Director, Healthy U