

Submitter: Rebecca Ngigi
On Behalf Of: Military Affiliated Youth
Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency
Management, Federal and World Affairs
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB466

Rebecca Ngigi
January 27, 2025
Regarding SB 466

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management,
Federal and World Affairs,

My name is Rebecca Ngigi, and I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 466, which appropriates funds for the Oregon Summer Star program. As a military-affiliated youth who grew up attending this camp and now serves as a camp counselor, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of Oregon Summer Star (OSS) in the lives of military-connected youth.

Growing up, I often felt underrepresented and unsupported as the child of a military veteran. My family faced challenges that others struggled to understand—the stress of parental war trauma and the impact of service-related injuries. These experiences were isolating, and I longed for a space where I could connect with others who shared my struggles.

Oregon Summer Star became that space for me. It provided a sense of community and belonging that I desperately needed. As a camper, I was surrounded by peers who understood the unique challenges of being a military youth. The camp's trauma-informed staff and mental health resources created a safe environment where I could heal, grow, and build resilience. Now, as a counselor, I have the privilege of guiding the next generation of campers and witnessing the same life-changing impact OSS has on others.

Without the funding provided by SB 466, this vital program risks being torn away from the youth who have built an Oregon Summer Star family. This camp is more than just a summer activity—it is a source of connection, healing, and leadership development for military-affiliated youth who are often overlooked and underserved. It empowers campers to develop a sense of identity, foster emotional resilience, and build lifelong friendships.

Supporting this bill is not just an investment in a summer camp; it is an investment in the mental health, well-being, and future leadership of Oregon's military youth. These children face disproportionate mental health challenges compared to their peers, and

programs like OSS provide a critical safety net. Senate Bill 466 would ensure that OSS can continue its mission, making camp free for families, supporting its all-volunteer staff, and expanding its capacity to serve more youth.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 466 and to preserve this indispensable resource for Oregon's military-connected youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Ngigi
Roseburg, OR
Military-Affiliated Youth and Oregon Summer Star Counselor