

To: The Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
From: Trust for Public Land  
Date: April 16, 2025  
Re: In Support of Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Sanchez and Lieber, and members of the Committee,

A growing body of research reflects the connection between access to green spaces and improved educational outcomes<sup>1</sup>. Studies consistently show that when young people can see greenery from their classroom windows or have access to nearby parks, their mental and physical health, concentration, and stress levels improve<sup>2</sup>. Yet, far too many Oregon students—especially those in rural areas—lack this essential access.

The **Oregon Rural Community Schoolyards Program** is working to change that by collaborating directly with students, educators, and community members to transform outdated, underutilized schoolyards into vibrant green spaces that reflect the unique culture and needs of individual communities.

These renovated schoolyards are more than just playgrounds—they become **essential community green spaces that provide recreation, and promote public health**. As Oregon experiences extreme weather, including intense rainstorms and dangerous heat waves, these schoolyards play a crucial role. Replacing asphalt with trees, gardens, and permeable surfaces not only cool surrounding areas but also reduces the risk of flooding by absorbing stormwater.

This legislative session, you have the opportunity to make a **high-impact, \$1.5 million investment** in the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyards Program. This funding would bridge critical gaps for **three** K-5 schoolyard projects in Madras, Ontario, and Riddle, Oregon, allowing **all three schoolyards** to be renovated to reflect each community's vision for a vibrant, accessible green space.

This is a **modest investment with an outsized impact**—one that will benefit Malheur, Douglas, and Jefferson counties for generations to come. **We urge you to make a lasting difference for Oregon students and communities by supporting a \$1.5 million investment in the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyards Program.**

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the well-being of Oregon's students and communities.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Trust for Public Land. (2021, August 25). Community Schoolyards™ projects: A game-changing solution to America's park equity problem. [tpl.org/community-schoolyards-report-2021](https://tpl.org/community-schoolyards-report-2021)

<sup>2</sup> Jodi Heckel, "A Green View through a Classroom Window Can Improve Student's Performance, Study Finds." Illinois News Bureau, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (January 22, 2016), <https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/314736>.

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