

To: The Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction
From: Trust for Public Land
Date: May 9, 2025
Re: In Support of Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Nosse, members of the Committee,

A growing body of research reflects the connection between access to green spaces and improved educational outcomes¹. 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 improve². 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is working to change that by collaborating directly with students, educators, and community members to transform outdated, underutilized schoolyards into vibrant green spaces that reflect the unique culture and needs of individual communities.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. These projects are **shovel-ready** and only need this final \$1.5M investment to begin construction.

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,

¹ 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

² 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>.

Mayor Debbie Folden Ontario, Oregon

Debbie Folden

Griffin Hewitt Ontario, Oregon

Tammy Vogt, Ontario, Oregon

Tammy Vogt

Jennifer Susuki Ontario, Oregon

Jennifer Susuki

Melissa Williams, Ontario, OR

Melissa Williams

Tim Brewer, Ontario, OR

Rev. Tim Brewer

James Vogt, Ontario, OR

James Vogt

Eduardo Melendrez, Ontario, OR

Eduardo Melendrez

Joni Delgado Ontario, Oregon

Rebecca Stricker, Ontario, Oregon

Rebecca Stricker

Andrea Bucholz Ontario, Oregon

Jodi Elizondo, Ontario, Oregon

Jodi Elizondo

Zoey Kus, Ontario, Oregon

Zoey Kus

Dolores Martinez ,Ontario Oregon

Dolores Martinez

Doug Hezeltine, Fruitland, ID

Doug Hezeltine

Christopher Plummer, Ontario,
Oregon

Christopher Plummer

Evelyn Dame, Fruitland, Idaho

Evelyn Dame

Tracy D. Guilford, Ontario, Oregon

Tracy D. Guilford

Rodney Williams, Ontario, OR

Rodney Williams

Abby Apodaca, Ontario, Oregon

Abby Apodaca

Jenna Mejia Ontario, Oregon

Jenna Mejia

Matt Mejia Ontario, Oregon

Matt Mejia

Jessica Ann Hiatt Nyssa, Oregon

Jessica Ann Hiatt

Angena Grove Ontario, Oregon

Angena Grove

Shawn Grove Ontario, Oregon

Shawn Grove

Mara Kirby-Garcia Ontario, Oregon

Mara Kirby-Garcia

Wendy J Hill Ontario, Oregon

Wendy J Hill

Tanna Peterson Ontario, Oregon

Tanna Peterson

Leticia Arvizu Ontario, Oregon

Leticia Arvizu

Josh Ramirez Ontario, Oregon

Josh Ramirez

David Armstrong Ontario, Oregon

David A. Armstrong

Brandi Carey Ontario, Oregon

Brandi Carey

Amy House Ontario, Oregon

Amy House

Christy Gillespie

Christy Gillespie Ontario, Oregon

Robert House Ontario, Oregon

Robert House