

Submitter: Rachel Jumago

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4112

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair McIntire, & the rest of the committee

I went to Trout Creek in 1996, and I remember how strange it felt at first to be with all these strange kids I didn't know, outside in the rain so much, with my classmates and teacher away from home...but by the end of the week, I felt it. We'd built a little community. I had friends from really different demographics of Portland. I LOVED my counselors. I felt a part of a place--I knew better now my own home--and this helped me learn to cherish it.

As a high school student leader it was even more impactful--I was suddenly given all this responsibility with support, encouragement and mentorship, and a passion for education and environmentalism that has only grown over the years.

After college & completing a tenure for Teach for America, the first thing I wanted to do when I moved back home was join the staff of Outdoor School. My dream came true--and once again, I was back in it. Every week, I saw lives changed. I saw kids who struggled in class come alive in hands-on science lessons outdoors. I saw kids making friendships across social class and race and religion. I saw high-schoolers step into leadership roles and thrive in ways they never knew they could. Every week, the last campfire and the tree-planting ceremonies were emotional--we'd built something special. Kids cried, and promised that in 4 years, they would be back. We knew many of them would--because Outdoor School is like an own ecosystem--it grows its own.

So you can imagine how heart-breaking it was when those budget cuts came and slashed the program, leaving kids with a weird, wet 3-day field trip, instead of the culture-changing, community-building magic of 6-day Outdoor School. I wrote an op-ed that appeared in The Portland Tribune and the song "Sandy River" to help raise awareness and funds, and even registered for people to donate to Friends of Outdoor School in lieu of wedding gifts. I was SO grateful when measure 99 passed and it felt like we'd finally done it--saved outdoor school for good!

Because I believe ODS is one of those things that people so easily take for granted--but it is also one of the essential things that sets us Oregonians apart--it makes us understand, value and care for our natural world. Many Americans forget that we literally rely on natural resources to survive--but we Oregonians remember. "Through education lies appreciation, & through appreciation the desire for preservation"--that quote from an old poster at Outdoor School has always stayed with me--and I know

we need it now more than ever.

So I ask you, on behalf of my kids, our community, and all those to come--please support Rep Hudson's bill to restore Outdoor School! It is too precious to lose.

Thank you sincerely,  
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