

Whole Earth Nature School

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House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature

Dear House Committee Members,

I am writing to state my support for Representative Hudson's HB 4112 to restore \$6 million in Outdoor School funding for 2026 and to reject further cuts to this important program. After growing from 67% participation statewide in 2017-2018 to 85% participation in 2024-2025, the essential educational experience provided by Outdoor School is facing a statewide crisis after the 20% cuts made in June.

As a Board Member for Whole Earth Nature School, a provider of Outdoor School in Lane County, we are strong advocates for the benefits of experiential outdoor learning as an essential tool in the development of our community's youth. Through hands-on learning opportunities in nature, students have a way of connecting directly to their education and their classmates in a way that is difficult or impossible to replicate in the classroom. With Oregon's economy largely dependent on natural resources management, introducing and educating our youth about nature and our place in the greater ecosystem is economically important as well. These programs lay the groundwork for career pathways in key Oregon industries such as natural resource management, outdoor recreation, forestry, and agriculture.

The voters passed Outdoor School for All in 2015 which established funding for these programs, and the recent funding cuts put these programs in peril. Please help stabilize this valuable program that helps allow organizations like ours to have consistent staffing and work opportunities in our community year round.

Outdoor School is a unique part of Oregon culture that readies our young people to be good stewards of our State and teaches them skills to care for themselves. When our youth are in near crisis over screen addiction, teaching them to unplug and go outside is more vital than ever.

With gratitude,
Leah Rosin