

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 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, 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. The immersion into a natural setting also helps these students gain individual confidence and resilience, essential life skills that will directly aid them as they move into their teen years and beyond. These programs lay the groundwork for career pathways in key Oregon industries such as natural resource management, outdoor recreation, forestry, and agriculture.

Outdoor School is a unique part of Oregon culture that readies our young people to take ownership over care for our state and care for themselves. Losing these programs would be a huge loss for families who may not otherwise be able to make these lifelong connections to the natural world. I urge you to work to save outdoor school.