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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4112

This program is one I attended in 6th grade, volunteered for as a high school student, and worked at as an adult. I have seen this program in multiple facets and it is—in every way imaginable—essential to the development of our youth.

I came to Oregon the summer before my 6th grade year. That fall, I attended the ODS program. Because of that program I felt accepted and welcomed by peers across the city. Without that program I would likely have not developed my strongest friendships and learned as much as I did. I remember the science, but more so I remember the social skills I learned and the development I had.

In high school that program saved my life and ignited my passion for education. I met more friends of course, but I also learned how much I enjoy teaching. Education is a vital field and we need to get more people excited to teach. I also grew as a person. I became more compassionate, I learned how to handle conflict appropriately, and I made lifelong friendships that still exist today.

As an adult in that program I've had the benefit of witnessing the above in the new generations of high schoolers and sixth graders. I have been lucky enough to have teachers write to us and tell us students who had been absent all school year leading up to their week had started being present more often. I have had teachers tell us students decided to try harder because of ODS. The environment there helps kids see that they are capable and we need kids who know they are capable of learning and being great.

I have seen student leaders grow. I watched shy timid sophomores grow into confident capable leaders. I have seen overly eager students learn how to give space for others. I've had student leaders personally thank me for my impact on them and I have had student leaders tell me they would not be alive without this program to help them find a purpose.

This program on those notes alone deserves more funding. But let's go a step further.

The environment needs defenders. It needs people who care. When you're out there learning in the forests we are seeing disappear, experiencing growth while watching the environment work and thrive around you, it's very difficult to argue against it. "Keep Oregon Green" as been on the radio for years. Part of that is educating about the ecosystem, its importance, and how we, as humans, are part of it and have our

responsibility just like any other animal.

Please if you do one thing correct, let it be this. Let it be the continuation and bolstering of this truly amazing program. If this Oregon legislature does not match my values, my votes will reflect it but I know this state loves its students and loves its forests. Let's do right by our state.