

Whole Earth Nature School

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February 11, 2026

House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature

Dear House Committee Members,

I am writing to state my strong support for Representative Hudson's HB 4112 to restore \$6 million in Outdoor School funding for 2026 and to reject further cuts to this critical educational 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 as a result of the 20% cuts made in June of last year.

As Executive Director of Whole Earth Nature School, a provider of Outdoor School in Lane County, I have seen first hand the incredible benefits of experiential outdoor learning and understand it as an essential tool in the development of our community's youth. Modern research in neuroscience shows that active experiential learning enhances student motivation, improves retention, bolsters peer-to-peer connection, and builds higher order thinking skills. We see in our own programs that hands-on learning opportunities in the outdoors allow students to connect directly to their education and their classmates in a way that is difficult or impossible to replicate in the classroom. The immersion into an outdoor overnight 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 environmental protection, natural resource management, outdoor recreation, forestry, and agriculture.

Outdoor School is an essential part of Oregon culture that readies our young people to take ownership over care for our state. Losing these programs would be a huge loss for families and communities who may not otherwise be able to make these lifelong connections to the natural beauty in our state. I urge you to pass HB 4112 and restore \$6 million from the \$12 million that was cut last year.

With love for Outdoor School,



Joe Ramagli
Executive Director - Whole Earth Nature School