

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. Non-profit Outdoor School providers like us operate very close to the bone and may not be able to remain financially viable and continue providing this essential educational experience if further cuts are made.

As an educator, I've seen the glow of Outdoor School first-hand on kids' faces as they begin to open up to the forest around them, observe the growth patterns in a leaf, and wonder about how a slug makes slime. This kind of nature connection is a joyful thing to witness. Many lucky kids have these experiences with their families every weekend, but I believe that *every child* should have this opportunity. Outdoor School is an equitable way to give every child the opportunity to make a connection to nature that will last a lifetime.

There is a pivotal moment in a child's development when scientific principles coalesce in growing brains and values about stewardship of the natural world take hold. The health of our earth depends on this confluence in the minds of millions of future problem solvers and policy makers, who today are "just kids." Outdoor School is the best way to support this kind of sustainability education.

In addition to being an educator and advocate, I am also a mom. I will admit to having many reservations about the world my kids will be expected to wrangle with as adults. It is a challenging time for many families and in the face of uncertainty it can feel tempting to make short term priorities. However, I believe that long term vision is needed to get us through. Because of its equity and developmental timing, Outdoor School has the potential to shape the future world that my kids will live in. I urge you to preserve the funding for this essential program.

Thank you for your consideration,
Meadow Scott