

Gauri Vengurlekar
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Portland, OR

TO: Oregon House Committee on Education

FR: Gauri Vengurlekar

DA: Today's date

RE: **Support for HB 4112—Restoration of Lottery Funds to Outdoor School**

Chairs Hudson and Vice-Chair McIntire, Members of the Committee. My name is Gauri Vengurlekar and I am providing testimony in favor of HB 4112, the restoration of Lottery Fund dedicated to Outdoor School.

In addition to all the science, nature and outdoor learning, Outdoor School also supports critical thinking, social skills and creativity. There is programming that focuses on leadership development for kids and the independence of going away to a sleep-away site for a week. This type of experience helps foster self-reliance and other attributes that serve kids well in many settings.

Outdoor School is a critical component of Oregon's Public Education system for many reasons. Learning about the natural world in our increasingly digitized environment has never been more important. Outdoor school enhances students' connection to nature, promotes activity and real-world experiential learning.

A direct vote of Oregon's electorate overwhelmingly supported M99 to dedicate a small percentage of Lottery funds for Outdoor School. Oregonians have spoken. At a time when there is so much division...one thing Oregonians can clearly get behind, regardless of where they live, is Outdoor School. Lawmakers should lean into programs and services that enjoy the kind of support Outdoor School has. We understand that Oregon faces revenue challenges to the General Fund and we appreciate that elected officials face difficult decisions. HB 4112 would restore \$6M in Lottery Funds (half of the 2025 cut) so that Outdoor School programming statewide can be stabilized in the second half of the biennium. M99 enjoys majority support in 34 of Oregon's 36 counties demonstrating the common values and deep unity around the tradition of sending Oregon youth to Outdoor School. Outdoor School is one of the things that makes Oregon, Oregon.

Again, thank you for your service to the State of Oregon and I strongly urge you to pass HB 4112 to support restoration of Oregon Outdoor School Lottery funding.