

Submitter: Kate and Zach Morning

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4112

To Chair Hudson, Vice-chair McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

In 2022 we married and moved back to Portland to help care for aging relatives. In 2024 we purchased our first house together, with the understanding that Measure 99 had secured funding for the Outdoor School program. We now have a 3 month old daughter. As 6th graders both of us had transformative experiences attending the MESD Outdoor School program, and our choice to settle permanently back in Oregon was due in part to the promise that our daughter could have that same opportunity. It was extremely concerning to see the 20% cuts the Legislature made in June 2025 to the program, which while technically within the rules, was in direct opposition to the will of the voters. We beg you to support HB 4112 to restore \$6 million in Outdoor School funding for 2026.

In high school both of us volunteered at Outdoor School as student leaders, and later worked as staff members. We have seen the incredible impacts of the program from all sides. Much has been said about the important role Outdoor School plays in improving STEM education for our students, but to us it is the social-emotional elements that are the most essential. We have both seen so many kids with such heartbreak stories come to flourish during their full week of Outdoor School. From the homeless student Zach worked with who experienced three full meals a day for the first time, to the girl Kate noticed was showing signs of abuse and she was able to report to DHS. We live in such divisive times, yet Outdoor School unites the children of Oregon in a way that's completely unique to our state. It's (supposed to be) a promise to every kid in Oregon no matter their background, race, or socio-economic status. Outdoor School isn't an "extra perk." It's an absolutely essential component of Oregon's K-12 education system.

Through Outdoor School, we both learned about how to be engaged community members, which has led directly to our careers working for nonprofit and public service organizations. As wayward high school students, it would have been so easy for either of us to fall through the cracks, but at Outdoor School we had positive adult role models who helped give us purpose and direction. We worry about the future for our daughter, but one glimmer of hope is knowing that she could attend Outdoor School in the future and the peers and older role models she interacts with will have had that shared empowering experience as well.

Please vote yes on HB 4112 for our daughter and the children of Oregon.

Sincerely, Your Constituents,
Kate & Zach Morning