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Camp Myrtlewood and Rogue Environmental Ed partner to serve 1,000 students a year in rural Southern Oregon from Douglas, Josephine, Jackson and Coos Counties. We are writing to urge you to support HB4112, which would restore full funding for students to attend Outdoor School in Oregon.

As a professional science educator, I hold a MS in Environmental Education, a BS in Biology and an Oregon Teaching Licence. I know Outdoor School to be a rare opportunity for students to engage in real-world science. Students get hands-on, engaging science lessons that are aligned both to the Next Generation Science Standards(NGSS) as well as the cognitive science of learning. As a former middle school science teacher I have been able to directly compare the learning that occurs in the classroom versus in the field. Outdoor School proves time and again to have strong learning and behavioral outcomes for students, with data that consistently shows students' interest and understanding of science is greater at Outdoor School than in their classrooms.

Last year's 20% funding cut to Outdoor School was devastating to our program and the schools that we work so closely with. Our staff worked tirelessly to make cuts, give scholarships and reassure schools that we would do whatever it took to make sure their students could still attend the program. Still schools were wary. How could they commit to a program that they might not be able to afford? The burden of these cuts falls on schools and unfortunately sometimes even on families to make up the deficit. Who does this impact the most, but rural, low income schools and districts that have consistently been left out of these types of learning opportunities in the past.

Measure 99 passed with significant voter approval to allocate 4% of Oregon Lottery dollars to help ensure that all 5th or 6th grade students in Oregon would have the opportunity to attend Outdoor School. This funding is the only reason students from Southern Oregon are able to attend, and therefore a crucial issue of equity. Without a full restoration of Outdoor School funding students in rural, Title 1 schools will be the ones who suffer. Our program and others like ours in our region will cease to exist. Because, despite our commitment to students and our belief in the value of Outdoor School, the stopgap measures we implemented to remain open are unsustainable. Students will no longer have the opportunity to go to Outdoor School where they live and the goals of Measure 99 and "Outdoor School for All" will fail.

Outdoor School is a right of passage in Oregon and the highlight of many students' academic years. In addition to the experiences of 5th and 6th grade students, Outdoor School offers leadership opportunities for High School students and young professionals. The continued full funding of Outdoor School not only provides high quality education for kids, but also the professional development of the next generation of teachers, resource managers and scientists.

From all of us at Rogue Environmental Ed and Camp Myrtlewood Outdoor School we want to thank you for your continued support of Outdoor School and the students of our region. Please show your support by funding Outdoor School the way in which the Oregon voters have voiced.

Sincerely,
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