

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

My name is Tammee Meneghin, and I am a Program Coordinator for NW Outdoor Science School, the largest Outdoor School provider in the state. I am writing to express my deep concerns about the budget cuts to Outdoor School programming.

The unfortunate reality is that the 20% budget reduction to Outdoor School funding has torn holes in our program's foundation. It has created a crisis of equity and access for our district partners and across our state:

- **Access Barriers:** Hundreds of students have already missed out on this one-time opportunity because district partners were forced to drop out due to the lack of funding. Hundreds of other families were forced to pay a fee to bridge the funding gap, which means our most vulnerable students could not afford attendance and will never be given another chance to attend.
- **Safety and Inclusion Compromised:** Districts can no longer afford the necessary Day Student option for our students with special education needs or complex medical needs, directly contradicting the values and mandates Oregon, ODE, and our school system are sworn to uphold. Furthermore, the budget for essential gear—like sleeping bags, rain gear, and boots—has been eliminated, creating a severe barrier to attendance and a detriment to the overall well-being and safety of those who do attend.
- **Structural Dismantling:** Our program has been forced to cut every single line item to absorb this reduction, impacting staff FTE, curriculum materials, medical supplies, translation services, specialty accommodations for TAG and SPED students, site and equipment maintenance, and more. Our program has not just been reduced; it is being structurally dismantled.

This is not the standard we promised our students. This is not how we honor the will of the people. This program is not a discretionary line item. It is a voter mandate.

Please support Rep Hudson's bill to restore \$6 million in Outdoor School funding for 2026 and reject further cuts to Outdoor School.

We must restore the 20% of funding to the Outdoor School program. Without restored funding, we cannot honor the public mandate, safeguard our commitment to equity and inclusivity, or ensure that every single Oregon fifth or sixth-grader, regardless of their circumstances, has an opportunity to learn through hands-on experience.

I am also writing as a parent of two neurodivergent college-age students whose lives were made infinitely better because of their experiences at Outdoor School. I cannot overstate the impact that Outdoor School has on students. My oldest child (20) is autistic and has ADHD. He was part of a specialized Social Communication Classroom from 1st - 9th grade. He attended Outdoor School as a 6th grader. I was so nervous about his ability to participate, and was thrilled to learn that his week was filled with a multitude of successes. For the first time ever, he was excited and engaged in

hands-on learning at field study, community building with his classmates, and social engagement through campfire. He ate new foods, and he practiced flexibility. His 6th-grade experience was life-changing. He went on to be a High School Student Leader several times and made Outdoor School the focus of his Senior Project. As a High School graduate, he volunteered as a Grad Student Leader more than a dozen times and now works at one of our Outdoor School sites and continues to cultivate new skills. He has stated many times that Outdoor School is the only place that he has ever felt a sense of belonging, as part of a community, and he is passionate about sharing everything that Outdoor School is with other 5th/6th graders and Student Leaders

My youngest child (18) has ADHD, anxiety, several medical issues, and has experienced a lot of trauma from extreme bullying. They also identify as non-binary and queer. As a 6th grader attending Outdoor School, they were able to interact with students from other schools and build community with their small field study group and teachers. It was one of their first positive elementary school experiences, which planted new seeds in their psyche. When they started High School, they were an active part of the student government and leadership. They returned to Outdoor School as a 7x Student Leader and part of the Student Leader Advisory Committee. These opportunities have positively shaped their worldview, centered their love of public service, and given them the strength and courage to pursue their dreams. They are now freshmen at Linfield University, and their success was rooted in Outdoor School.

Please protect and restore full funding for Outdoor School so we can honor the public mandate of Oregonians, safeguard our commitment to equity and inclusivity, and ensure that every single Oregon fifth or sixth-grader, regardless of their circumstances, has an opportunity to learn through hands-on experience.

Sincerely and with gratitude,
Tammee Meneghin
2781 SE Sunflower Court Hillsboro, OR 97123
503-307-1111