

February 12, 2026

RE: Outdoor School Is Essential Education - Support HB 4112

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to urge you to reject further cuts to Outdoor School and support HB 4112 to restore \$6 million in funding.

Outdoor School is not just enrichment or a “nice to have” benefit. It is essential education that delivers outcomes Oregon students need, particularly at a time when our K-12 system is under immense strain.

Outdoor learning has shaped my family across generations.

As a parent of a neurodivergent child, I have seen how transformative it is when learning moves outside four walls. In traditional classroom settings, my child often has to work twice as hard just to navigate the environment. Outdoors, something shifts. There is space. There is movement. There is freedom. Curiosity leads. Strengths emerge. Confidence grows.

That kind of experience is not enrichment - it is access.

I know this personally because outdoor education changed my own life. As a student at Albuquerque Academy, I participated in an outdoor education program that profoundly shaped me. Those experiences sparked my lifelong love of nature, built independence and resilience, and ultimately influenced my decision to attend college in Oregon. You could say outdoor education altered my life trajectory.

When we invest in Outdoor School, we are investing in identity, belonging, and possibility - especially for students whose brilliance may not always fit neatly inside a classroom.

That opportunity should remain available to every student in Oregon.

Outdoor School builds science literacy through hands-on learning; strengthens social-emotional competence, confidence, and belonging; improves learning behaviors, especially for students who struggle in traditional classroom settings; provides immersive, high-impact experiences that are difficult to replicate indoors; and lays critical groundwork for post-secondary readiness while introducing students to career pathways.

In 2016, Oregonians made a clear decision when 67% of voters approved Measure 99, establishing Outdoor School as a statewide educational commitment funded through the State School Fund. Oregon has since become a national leader in outdoor education, a distinction that reflects both voter intent and bipartisan legislative support.

Last year, Outdoor School funding was cut by 20%. Programs across the state are still absorbing those losses. Additional proposed cuts of 2.5-5% would further undermine access, equity, and program quality, particularly for students and schools that rely on Outdoor School the most.

The Legislature has the opportunity to uphold the will of Oregon voters by holding Outdoor School harmless from further cuts and restoring \$6 million.

I urge you to support HB 4112 and ensure Outdoor School remains a core component of public education in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashley Potter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ashley" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Potter".

Ashley Potter
Parent, Eugene 4J School District
Higher Education Professional and Community Member
Eugene, Oregon