Submitter: Madeline Hall

On Behalf Of: Klamath Outdoor Science School

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4112

In a world where less and less money and care is being put into child development, and screens are dividing and isolating all age groups, keeping access to outdoor education is more important than ever.

Traditional education is confining, and caters to very few types of learning styles. As someone who went to an outdoor school as a child, and as an outdoor educator now, I can personally attest to the way that outdoor school impacts children, as I have both seen that impact and experienced it firsthand. It builds a student's self-esteem, allows for building social bridges, it gives children with non-traditional learning styles a real chance to thrive in the classroom, and it instills an appreciation for the natural world around us.

Many children currently affected by this bill were harmed by the pandemic. They are behind the curve socially and academically because of all the damages of distance learning. Many of them have never spent a night away from home, and are unacquainted with the outdoors due to quarantine. Outdoor school helps close many of those developmental gaps. It introduces them to hands on, in-person science that many of them missed. It helps them navigate complex, in person social interactions they were denied. It allows them to branch out from their parents for the first time and take those risks in a safe way. And it teaches them that the outside world and other humans are safe after they spent key years in their development trapped indoors.

Natural resources are one of Oregon's biggest assets. Why would we not want Oregon's future to understand and value that asset? In 2016, Oregon politicians agreed that all 5th and 6th graders are entitled to an outdoor education, and I fail to see why that wouldn't remain true now. Oregon's future is not a bargaining chip, it's not an extra expense you can cut, and it's not something we can afford to lose.