Support Outdoor School Legislation - SB 439 and HB 2648

Goal of SB 439 and HB 2648:
To create opportunities for every Oregon 5th or 6th grade student to experience the world through hands-on field study and natural science-focused activities at an Outdoor School program, to better understand the place they live, and to discover their opportunities and responsibilities as citizens.

What is Outdoor School?
Oregon’s outdoor school programs are a proud Oregon tradition dating back to the late 1950s and have been experienced by over 1 million Oregonians. But today only around half of Oregon students get to participate in the program. Outdoor school at its most effective is a week long, residential field science program for 5th or 6th graders that:
- Gives students an opportunity to study natural sciences hands-on and collaboratively resulting in improved scores on standardized tests, especially in STEM fields.
- Accessible to kids of all abilities and learning styles.
- Builds self-sufficiency and leadership skills.

Oregon voters support Outdoor School:
- Two-thirds (64%) of Oregon voters support spending $20 million a year to ensure all students get a chance to attend residential outdoor school programs.
- 93% of Oregonians think it is important to get Oregon schoolchildren into programs that get them outdoors to learn about science and the environment.
  - 67% of Oregonians think it is “extremely important” or “very important.”

Senate Bill 439 and House Bill 2648
- The bills establish a state Outdoor Education Fund, set criteria for eligible programs, designate Oregon State University Extension Service as the administrative agency, and seek $22 million per year to support the program.
- The $22 million would cover administrative, program fees, transportation, tuition, room and board to send all Oregon fifth or sixth-grade student (approximately 50,000 students) to a full week (5 nights/6 days) of Outdoor School or a comparable outdoor education experience reflecting local needs.

Proposed funding mechanisms under consideration (General Fund is current placeholder):
- Solid Waste Fee: $22 million per year from a fee imposed on all disposal sites that receive domestic solid waste through a $4.40 increase in the tipping fee.
- Unclaimed Bottle Deposit Funds: In 2017, the sources of funds for the Outdoor Education Fund will be a portion of unclaimed returnable bottle deposits currently retained by beverage distributors in an amount not to exceed $22 million per year. Per legislation passed in 2013, the current five-cent deposit will increase to 10-cents per container and more containers will be included in the system.

For more information, please contact:
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