

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Cole and Collins and Ranking Members DeLauro and Murray,

We, the undersigned members and partners of the [Outdoors Alliance for Kids \(OAK\)](#), wrote last year to identify our funding priorities. Today, we write again during a very different moment. While our funding priorities remain the same, namely the allocation of critically needed federal resources to support the agencies that manage the outdoor spaces used by the children and families our members serve, we know the prospects of achieving those priorities are very different from when we first wrote. We hope that the FY 25 Appropriations process will return a sense of normalcy and stability to our federal government partners who play an important role in the delivery of much needed services across the diverse communities our coalition serves.

OAK is a leading national alliance of more than 100 businesses and non-profit organizations representing more than 60 million individuals across the U.S., with a common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. One-hundred million people in the U.S. – including 28 million children – do not live within walking, biking, or rolling distance of a safe park or green space. Our members and supporters believe that the need for ample opportunities for all to recreate and work in the outdoors has never been more apparent. Providing these opportunities will promote health and wellness and drive a sustainable outdoor recreation economy.

Beyond the proven benefits of outdoor access in promoting community health and wellness and engaging more youth in environmental stewardship, connecting youth to the outdoors is a vital part of maintaining and growing an outdoor economy. According to the [Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), outdoor recreation annually generates \$563.7 billion in gross economic output, comprising 2.2 percent of the United States gross domestic product (GDP). Federal investment in this sector is especially vital now to ensure the survivability and resilience of this economy.

For these reasons, we urge Congress to act include the following priorities into the House and Senate FY25 appropriations legislation:

Department of the Interior

- **Fund the Every Kid Outdoors program at \$25 million.** The Every Kid Outdoors (EKO)

program provides fourth graders with a pass so they and their families can access national park sites for free for a year. Funding will be used for program staffing for the National Park Service and to cover transportation costs. Investing in EKO now will be essential in allowing agencies to provide equitable access to federal public lands.

- **Fund Youth Programs through the National Park Service at \$100 million** to allow young people the experience to connect with the outdoors through national, state and local parks.
- **Fund the National Park Service to build a more accessible National Park System at an amount of \$11 million**. This would fund efforts to expand tribal co-stewardship of national parks, address transportation barriers for underserved communities, improve accessibility for people with disabilities, and construct the newly established African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program.
- **Provide \$125 million for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program**. This vital infusion of significant funding into the development of urban parks and green spaces will improve public access, decrease urban heat islands, and increase quality of life for the over 100 million people in the U.S., including 28 million children, that do not have a quality park or green space close to home.
- **Provide \$1.35 billion for the Land and Water Conservation Fund**, supporting interagency efforts to conserve public lands, preserve working lands and culturally important sites, and meet the recreation needs of communities all over via state and local assistance grants. OAK was disappointed to see a rescission of \$94M in LWCF funding in the FY24 appropriations bill. There is a long list of time-sensitive conservation and recreation priorities at the federal, state and local level that are waiting in line as programs under the LWCF umbrella remain oversubscribed. It is critical that any unobligated prior-year funding be reprogrammed to projects and grant programs with outstanding need.
- **Provide \$15 million to the National Park Service to fund the work of the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program** to bring the expertise of over a century of land management to the greater conservation and recreation community.
- **Provide \$10 million to the Department of the Interior for implementation of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act** (AKA the “EXPLORE Act”), Pub. L. 118-234, recently enacted landmark legislation that will expand access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans.

Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service

- **Provide robust funding to the Department of Interior and U.S. Forest Service’s various maintenance and visitor services to continue the decades long partnership between Service and Conservation Corps and our federal land agencies**. Many Service and Conservation Corps engage in projects focused on disaster response, outdoor recreation and training the next generation of land and resource managers. To support these projects, Corps need robust funding for land management and natural resource

accounts that bolster community resiliency, conserve and restore public lands and waters, increase reforestation, and improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

Department of Agriculture

- **Provide \$5 million to the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service for implementation of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act** (AKA the "EXPLORE Act"), Pub. L. 118-234, recently enacted landmark legislation that will expand access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans.

Department of Health and Human Services

- **Fund the Drowning Prevention Program at the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control at \$5 million to prevent drownings.** Drownings are the leading cause of accidental deaths among our youngest children (ages 0-4) and states have seen increased rates of drowning deaths during the COVID-19 crisis. Funding is for proven drowning prevention programs with national organizations working with underserved youth, support for state drowning surveillance efforts and a national plan on water safety.
- **Fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at \$130.42 million for their Division for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity.** DNPAO leads national efforts to prevent chronic illness by encouraging good nutrition and regular physical activity, and includes the Active People Healthy Nation initiative which aims to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027.

Department of Commerce

- **Fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for \$12 million for the Bay-Watershed Education and Training program** to provide increased watershed education for students in K-12 education.
- **Provide \$8 million to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to fund the NOAA Office of Education.** NOAA's Office of Education provides scholarships and grants, and collaborates with universities and organizations, among other work to promote NOAA science in school settings.

Environmental Protection Agency

- **Fund the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Education at \$14 million** to provide people from all backgrounds with practical applications for science, technology, engineering and math that enable them to make informed decisions and take responsible action to protect their health and build strong communities.
- **Fund the Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Federal Partnership at \$2.43 billion** to reconnect overburdened or economically distressed urban communities to their waterways by improving federal agency coordination, and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts. This partnership will improve

our Nation's water systems, and promote their economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Department of Transportation

- **Provide funding for the Department of Transportation in the amount of \$78.4 billion for the Active Transportation program**, which encourages people to include physical activity in their daily routine through exercise or as part of their transportation options. Active Transportation does that through infrastructure investments that offer active transportation options, and increased mixed-use neighborhoods.
- **Provide funding for the Department of Transportation in the amount of \$2.4 billion for Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development**, which provides funds for investments in transportation and transit infrastructure.

The Corporation For National and Community Service (Operating as AmeriCorps)

- **Provide robust funding to protect AmeriCorps service positions and investments that have been made to AmeriCorps member living allowances.** AmeriCorps members provide critical services to communities in need across the nation. AmeriCorps organizations respond to natural disasters, provide support for veterans, improve state, local and federal outdoor recreation sites and partner in conservation work. AmeriCorps helps these organizations leverage private and local funding to engage local young adults in service.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- **Provide funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the amount of \$2.9 billion for Community Development Block Grants** to help local governments by providing grants for decent housing, suitable living environments, and economic opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration of our FY 25 funding requests. We hope that you will see the benefits of funding the outdoor recreation community and recognize its vital contribution to our nation's economy, health, and spirit.

Sincerely,

Active San Gabriel Valley

American Camp Association

American Hiking Society

American Society of Landscape Architects

Appalachian Mountain Club

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Children & Nature Network

City Parks Alliance

Green Schoolyards America

Higher Ground

KABOOM!

Latino Outdoors

National Recreation and Parks Association

Nature For All

Next100 Coalition

North American Association for Environmental Education

Project NatureWorthy

Safe Routes Partnership

Seed Your Future

Sierra Club

Teens to Trails

The Association for Experiential Education

The Corps Network

Trust for Public Land

The Wilderness Society