

Date

Staff

Senator

Senator Address

Dear [staff]:

We, the undersigned members and friends of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), urge you to support H.R. 3186, the Every Kid Outdoors Act (EKO). This legislation would codify the popular Every Kid in a Park (EKIP) program that supports opportunities for fourth graders and their families to connect with our parks and public lands, at a time when fewer and fewer children are experiencing America's great outdoors.

EKO passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support and was recently reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored the bill at no cost, making it a fiscally responsible legislation. It is imperative that the Senate make passing this bill a priority before the end of this Congress.

In the program's first year, more than two million fourth graders downloaded the EKIP pass. In addition, during the first two years, nearly \$5 million in private funding was leveraged to support transportation costs for children from low-income schools across America. Many governors appreciate the long-term potential of the program in creating new supporters of parks and are accepting the EKIP passes in their own state park systems. Nevada took it a step further and passed a law to give free entry to all state parks for fifth graders.

OAK is a national strategic partnership of nearly 100 businesses and organizations representing more than 60 million Americans with the purpose of advocating for children and youth to have opportunities to experience the outdoors. Members of OAK have contributed significantly to EKIP's success by providing transportation grants and delivering high quality programming to kids, many of whom are visiting a public park for the first time.

Today's young people are spending less time outdoors than any generation. Yet, America's parks drive an \$887 billion economy, supporting more than seven million jobs across our nation. Outdoor recreation generates nearly \$125 billion in tax revenue and our outdoor economy depends on kids and families accessing natural areas to hike, camp, and fish.

As children spend less time outdoors, they are become more sedentary, which contributors to the chronic disease and childhood obesity crisis. In addition, more than 20 percent, or \$190.2 billion, of annual medical spending in the United States is on health care costs of obesity-related illness. Childhood obesity alone costs our country \$14 billion in direct medical expenses.

EKO is a cost-effective, common sense way to improve children's health, support long-term economic investment, and introduce a new generation to the beauty and wonder of America's public lands, waters, and shores. We urge you to support the passage of H.R. 3186 in the Senate and make connecting our nation's fourth graders and supporting their health a priority.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.