



September 21, 2016

Dear Senator/Representative:

We, the undersigned members of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), write to ask for your support for the Every Kid in a Park program. OAK is a national strategic partnership of businesses and organizations from diverse sectors of the economy, representing more than 30 million individuals. Together we are working to advance equitable and readily available opportunities for children, youth, and families to connect with the outdoors. OAK supports public policies, initiatives, and investments in education, community health and wellness, and environmental stewardship, that get children and youth playing, learning and active in nature.

The Every Kid in a Park initiative was launched by President Barack Obama in 2015 to inspire a new generation to get outdoors. Through this new initiative, every fourth grader in America can obtain a pass for free entry for themselves and their families into more than 2,000 public lands, waters, and shores nationwide for an entire year. Several state park systems are participating, expanding opportunities for children. The initiative also works with Title 1 schools to help get children from lower income schools outdoors by providing transportation grant funding from both private donors and the federal government. We urge you to support the Every Kid in a Park program by promoting the program within your state or district and among your colleagues. We also hope that you will visit a park with a fourth grade class next time you are in your home state or district to learn more about the program and the value of outdoor opportunities for children.

There is no better time than now, during the year of the National Park Service's Centennial, to ensure that today's children have every opportunity to visit and learn about our parks and public lands. Our parks and public lands were originally established with bi-partisan support over the course of many different administrations and are held in public trust for all to enjoy. We urge you to look ahead to the next 100 years and come together to support important programs that allow all of our children to share in our natural and cultural heritage for years to come. The National Park Service, through Centennial Challenge Projects, has leveraged \$693,519 in federal spending into an additional \$1,111,381 matching dollars from the private sector. Through these dollars and other investments in transportation, more than 500,000 fourth graders had an opportunity to experience our public lands and waters, learn about the natural world, all while getting active in the outdoors during the first year of the program.

OAK members across the spectrum support the Every Kid in a Park initiative. By providing financial resources, hosting events, building partnerships with fourth grade classrooms and local land management agencies, and by getting the word out to our networks, collectively we've reached several thousand fourth graders in addition to the Centennial Challenge Projects.

Our children's lives are out of balance. Nearly one in three children are overweight or obese, and we are seeing more and more kids develop what were once adult-onset only chronic diseases. Yet kids and youth today spend less time outdoors than any generation in history, devoting an average of just minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play while spending an average of seven and a half hours every day on electronic media. By ensuring children, youth, and their families have opportunities to play, learn, and be physically active in the outdoors, we can help improve health and decrease the risk of chronic diseases.

As the Every Kid in a Park initiative enters its second year, we urge members of Congress to support and promote the program to ensure every fourth grader in America has an opportunity to learn firsthand about our shared natural and cultural heritage. We encourage you to learn more about the program by visiting a park with a fourth grade class or community group. For questions, or to discuss additional opportunities to support the initiative, please contact OAK's Chair, Jackie.Ostfeld@sierraclub.org; 202-548-6584. Thank you in advance for helping to get America's kids outdoors.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Childhood
American Forests
American Heart Association
American Hiking Society
American YouthWorks
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education
Big City Mountaineers
Boys & Girls Club
California Outdoor Engagement Coalition
Children & Nature Network
Conservation Legacy
The Corps Network
Girl Scouts of the USA

Latino Outdoors
National Interscholastic Cycling Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Park Trust
North American Association for Environmental Education
Public Lands Service Coalition
REI
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Seed Your Future
Sierra Club
Wilderness Inquiry
The Wilderness Society