



October 17, 2024

Pat Sullivan, Director - Washington State Office of Financial Management
Sheri Sawyer, Deputy Director of Policy & Outreach, Office of the Governor
Jon Snyder, Senior Policy Advisor, Outdoor Recreation & Economic Development
Jim Cahill, Senior Budget Advisor to the Governor
Matthew Hunter, Budget Advisor
P.O. Box 43113
Olympia, WA 98504-3113

Re: Requesting additional funding in the 2025-27 Operating Budget to support the No Child Left Inside grant program

Dear Pat Sullivan, Sheri Sawyer, Jon Snyder, Jim Cahill, and Matthew Hunter,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we thank you for your strong support of the No Child Left Inside grant program, which connects youth to nature through outdoor education and recreation programs. Studies have shown the incredible benefits to children who spend time outside. However, far too often, race, income, identity, ability and zip code affect children's regular and safe access to nature. The No Child Left Inside program helps level that imbalance. Yet, funding requests have always significantly surpassed available grant dollars. Given the current budget projections, we recognize the need to be thoughtful in our request. The need is great. Therefore, **we respectfully request that the No Child Left Inside grant program be funded at \$7 million in the 2025-27 Operating Budget.**

Revitalized in 2015 by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation, No Child Left Inside (NCLI) is now the critical state program connecting youth and families from a variety of underserved communities – including low-income, Black, Indigenous and people of color, immigrants and refugees, and people with disabilities – to the outdoors across the state. Since 2015, the program has served more than 100,000 youth from a wide variety of different locations, economic backgrounds, races, ethnicities and abilities. On average, the program serves 70% of youth eligible for free and reduced lunch, 57% youth of color, 17% of English language learners and 21% of youth with disabilities. Each year, NCLI has received more and more grant requests each grant cycle, however, with no additional funding, only one-third of the applicants will receive financial support. We can do better to meet the needs of children and young adults across the state. With a strong track record of success, No Child Left Inside is deeply impactful for Washington youth, but far too many youth are left unserved. With more funding, we can strengthen its impact by serving more programs that provide transformational outdoor experiences to youth across the state.

During the 2023-25 grant cycle, over 100 projects were funded with the one-time \$2.5 million appropriation for NCLI. At \$7 million, almost 60% of programs were funded, and over 50,000 youth had access to meaningful experiences in nature. Understanding the potential limitations with the forecasted budget in Washington, we are asking to maintain the existing NCLI funding level to ensure Washington youth continue to have the same opportunities provided through this program. **We respectfully request that you fund No Child Left Inside at \$7 million, which would include \$4.5 million in carry-forward funding and an additional ongoing \$2.5 million, for the program in your proposed operating budget.** With this investment, a new baseline can be set and will enable this highly successful and impactful program to be sustained over time.

With your help, we can provide more children the opportunity to connect to nature. The No Child Left Inside grant program can change lives for tens of thousands of Washington's youth. Please make a sound and smart investment for the future of Washington's children by increasing the state's investment in No Child Left Inside. This is a down payment for the future leaders, innovators and advocates of our communities across the state. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to connecting children to Washington's great outdoors.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Reyes
Urban to Wild Program Manager - Seattle
The Wilderness Society

Andrea Ilmer
Advocacy Director
Washington Trails Association

Martin LeBlanc
Principal
LBC Action

Andres Guerrero-Guzman
Outreach and Policy Manager
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

Chris Liu
Community Partnerships Manager
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
The Mountaineers

Greg Barker
Managing Director, WSPEF
Washington School Principals Education Foundation