February 27, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned members of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids, write to express our deepest gratitude for your leadership to connect millions of children with America’s great outdoors. By waiving entrance fees on our public lands for fourth graders and their families, your “Every Kid in a Park” initiative will ensure kids across this nation have opportunities to play, learn and get physically active in the natural world.

The Outdoors Alliance for Kids is a national strategic partnership of businesses and organizations representing more than 30 million individuals from diverse sectors of the economy with the common interest in expanding the number and quality of opportunities for children, youth and families to connect with the outdoors. OAK supports public policies and investments that expand outdoor and environmental education, promote community health and wellness, and engage youth in environmental stewardship opportunities.

Our children’s lives are out of balance. Today’s kids spend fifty per cent less time outdoors than generations preceding them. Park deserts, a lack of transportation, school budget cuts, screen time and overscheduled families are among the barriers keeping our children from experiencing the natural world. First Lady Michelle Obama knows all too well that our children are not getting enough physical activity, with dire consequences for their health and wellbeing. Over the last 20 years, childhood obesity has doubled and adolescent obesity has tripled.

When kids spend time outdoors, they are more likely to get their recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Research shows that time in nature can improve mental health by reducing anxiety, stress and the symptoms of attention deficit disorders. Learning in the outdoors has also been found to increase academic performance across subject areas and increase interest in learning. By visiting America’s parks, forests, monuments and other public lands, children will also gain an appreciation for the rich natural and cultural diversity that make up the fabric of this great nation.

Your “Every Kid in a Park” initiative couldn’t be more timely and needed. By spearheading a national movement to connect children with our public lands and waters, “Every Kid in a Park” will improve our children’s health and wellbeing while connecting them with their natural and cultural heritage.
We cannot thank you enough for launching this important initiative. The Outdoors Alliance for Kids shares your vision and will continue to work to ensure that children and youth across America have every opportunity to experience the great outdoors. Should you have any questions about this letter, please have your staff contact Jackie Ostfeld, Sierra Club’s Nearby Nature Director and Chair of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (202-548-6584 or Jackie.Ostfeld@sierraclub.org).

Sincerely,

ACA | Canoe-Kayak-SUP-Raft-Rescue
Alliance for Childhood
America Walks
America’s State Parks
American Camp Association, Inc.
American Forests
American Heart Association
American Hiking Society
American Society of Landscape Architects
Appalachian Mountain Club
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education
Association for Experiential Education
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Choose Outdoors
Conservation Legacy
Discover Outdoors Foundation
Girl Scouts of the USA
Hipcamp, Inc.
International Mountain Bicycling Association
IslandWood
Izaak Walton League of America
Kids4Trees
Lantern Camps
Mohican School in the Out-of-Doors
National Interscholastic Cycling Association
National Military Family Association
National Outdoor Leadership School
National Park Trust
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
NatureBridge
North American Association for Environmental Education
O’Neill Sea Odyssey
Outdoor Foundation
Outdoor Industry Association
Outdoor Outreach
Outdoors Empowered Network
Public Lands Service Coalition
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Sierra Club
SOS Outreach
The Corps Network
The Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
The Wilderness Society
Trout Unlimited
Wilderness Inquiry
YMCA of the USA

www.outdoorsallianceforkids.org