Dear Senators Mark Kirk and Jack Reed and Representatives Mike Fitzpatrick and John Sarbanes,

We, the undersigned members of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), write to thank you for your leadership on environmental education. Your bill, the No Child Left Inside Act of 2015, will ensure that today’s children and youth have opportunities to learn in and about the natural world.

OAK 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.

As you know, environmental education has been shown to increase academic performance across subject areas and has been linked to improvements in critical thinking skills, student motivation and civic engagement. A study conducted by the California Department of Education found students participating in outdoor environmental education programs saw an increase in science test scores of 27 per cent.

Environmental education, particularly when practiced outdoors, can also increase the amount of physical activity children and youth engage in during the school day. Opportunities to get moving during school are particularly important as the childhood obesity epidemic threatens the health, wellness and academic achievement of our children. Outdoor learning is one of the important chances that kids have to move around and get their recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity each day.

We appreciate your commitment to advancing opportunities for public school children and adolescents to learn in and about the environment. The No Child Left Inside Act of 2015 will ensure states are able to begin implementing state plans for environmental education. According to the North American Association for Environmental Education, since the bill’s first introduction during the 110th Congress, more than half of all states in the country have completed environmental literacy plans (ELPs) and more than half of all ELPs have been formally adopted by their states. Your leadership has already had an
incredible impact across America. Passage of the No Child Left Inside Act will help ensure students have the foundation they need to succeed in the global economy.

Thank you again for your support for environmental education. Please feel free to 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) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

ACA | Canoe-Kayak-SUP-Raft-Rescue
Alliance for Childhood
American Camp Association, Inc.
American Forests
American Heart Association
American Hiking Society
American Society of Landscape Architects
Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Association for Experiential Education
Children & Nature Network
Choose Outdoors
Conservation Legacy
Girl Scouts of the USA
Hipcamp, Inc.
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
International Mountain Bicycling Association
IslandWood
Izaak Walton League of America
Kids4Trees
National Interscholastic Cycling Association
National Military Family Association

National Park Trust
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
North American Association for Environmental Education
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Foundation
Outdoor Industry Association
Outdoors Empowered Network
Public Lands Service Coalition
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Recreating with Kids
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Sierra Club
SOS Outreach
The Corps Network
The Wilderness Society
Transforming Youth Outdoors
Trout Unlimited
Trust for Public Land
Wilderness Inquiry
YMCA of the USA