

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2020

Mr. David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

We write to request that the U.S. Department of the Interior extend the 2019-2020 Every Kid Outdoors pass into the 2020-2021 school year, thus upholding the commitment to outdoor recreation accessibility for future generations. Since 2015, the Department of the Interior has offered fourth graders and their families free entrance to all federally managed public lands. Congress authorized the program with the bipartisan passage of the Every Kid Outdoors Act in 2019. However, the onset of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented another hurdle for students and families to accessing America's public lands, waters, and historic sites.

State and local governments across the country have responded to the pandemic by implementing stay-at-home orders, encouraging only essential travel, and closing parks, significantly reducing family outings. Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supported physical distancing standards and limiting outdoor recreation to parks and areas that are close to home.¹ Students and families that adhere to the federal, state, and local guidance have been not been able to fully utilize their Every Kid Outdoors pass.

While these mitigation efforts have been critical to ensuring the safety of the nation as a whole, the \$778 billion outdoor industry has been heavily impacted. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 75 percent of small businesses in the outdoor recreation industry are reporting significant, negative effects due to the pandemic.² This is 31 percent more than the national average. By extending the Every Kid Outdoors pass into the next year, millions of students and their families can continue to enjoy outdoor recreation and help this vital sector of the U.S. economy recover from COVID-19.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter. Since the 2019-2020 Every Kid Outdoors pass has already expired, we request a swift and thorough consideration of a full year extension of the pass so that students and their families can continue to explore the rich natural and cultural history on display in our public lands.

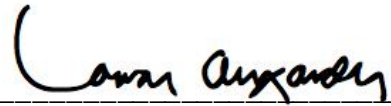
¹ Visiting Parks and Recreational Facilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html>.

² Small Business Pulse Survey, U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). <https://portal.census.gov/pulse/data/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Heinrich', written over a horizontal line.

MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lamar Alexander', written over a horizontal line.

LAMAR ALEXANDER
United States Senator