

1/31/2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

To whom this may concern,

My name is Liz Bouchelle and I am a parent who resides in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

I am writing to ask that my representatives in my district vote in favor of HB376 to establish an Outdoor Preschool Licensing pilot. Here are a few of the reasons why I support the bill:

Learning outdoors opens children's creative and critical thinking skills by learning to be out in nature and will be able to climb, dig, and create items from their surroundings.

Being outdoors will ease and reduce infection of COVID-19 or flu viruses.

Children from low-income communities and those with special needs do not have equitable access to State scholarships or special education services and are cut off from the benefits of nature-based early childhood education because immersive outdoor preschools currently cannot be licensed;

A staggering number of child care programs in Maryland have closed during the covid-19 pandemic leaving a shortage of options for families. Outdoor preschools offer an alternative form of child care at a time when many families seek the physical and mental health benefits of being outdoors; and

Outdoor preschools promote the skills and values that lead to environmental literacy, which supports goals of the Maryland Partnership For Children In Nature and the K-12 Environmental Literacy Standards required for graduation in Maryland.

I have a 2 year old and a 4 month old and would really be interested in having them be part of an all outdoor preschool. We love hiking and playing outside. Even now in the snow, I make great effort to bundle them up and go outside. I support this bill and hope my representatives will support it too.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB376. I support this important effort and encourage all to vote in favor of HB376!

Sincerely,

Liz Bouchelle

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