



February 7, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbury, Alonzo Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Delegates Atterbury and Washington:

My name is Rene Averitt-Sanzone and on behalf of The Parents' Place of MD (www.ppmmd.org), a statewide parent training and health information center that serves families who have children with disabilities and special healthcare needs and I am writing in support of HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot. The families we serve and support are from all districts across the state.

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

- Children from low-income communities and those with disabilities and special healthcare 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.

Our families with preschool children want their children to have opportunities to play, learn, and make friends with children without disabilities. When programs like this are options for families then ALL children benefit, grow, and learn.

The Parents' Place of MD would like to ask the committee for a favorable vote for HB 376.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB376. We hope that you will support this important effort and vote yes to HB376!

Sincerely,

Rene Averitt-Sanzone

Rene Averitt-Sanzone
Executive Director