

**February 01, 2022**

**RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot**

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Solange Long and I am a parent who resides in Prince Frederick, MD.

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 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.

(Include a personal story. Tell your representative why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your family members and your community.)

Nature based education has been important to our family. Our 4 year old daughter has attended a nature based preschool for the past two years and has excelled. Not only has she learned so much about the world around her, but she has gained more confidence and emotional growth. By experiencing outdoor play, she has gained physical and mental strength, and learned to trust her own decisions. The hands-on learning has really allowed her to see the full picture of what she is learning and how it relates to the world around her.

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

Sincerely,

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