

**February 6, 2022**

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

My name is Christina Woods and I am parent who resides in your district. 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.

Outdoor preschools promote the skills and values that lead to a healthy world. Now more than ever our children need a safe and natural space to explore and learn. Covid has shifted every aspect of our lives and has made many people all around the world feel despair and loss of hope. Many people have had to confront death, some for the first time, and countless children have been through this heartbreak.

While in the midst of this, parents are trying to keep their own lives together while guiding their kids' young lives.

As a parent, I was confronted with this and honestly did not know what to do. I was scared and starting to lose hope.

I took this time to reflect on the resilience of nature and human's history of trying, unsuccessfully, to control it.

Then it struck me, why try to control something that is meant to be one with humans? Something that has been the classroom and curriculum of humans since the beginning of their existence?

Nature is the most appropriate classroom for our youth. I am thankful for this discovery for my family, and wish this reunion with nature for every human being possible.

To quote Jane Goodall:

“Let us use the gift of our lives to make this a better world. For the sake of our children and theirs. For the sake of those struggling in poverty. For the sake of the lonely. And for the sake of our brothers and sisters in the natural world – the animals, the plants, the trees. Rise to the challenge, inspire and help those around you, play your part. Find your reasons for hope and let them guide you onward. “

An education in and with nature is my family’s reason for hope, and I ask you to support this for all of those that hold this in their heart.

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

Namaste,  
Christina Woods

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