

February 5, 2022

The Honorable Robin Grammer, Jr.

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Delegate Grammer and Ways and Means Committee Members:

My name is Jenna Tomczewski and I am a 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.

My daughter began attending Notchcliff Forest Preschool during the spring of its pilot year in 2020. Notchcliff Forest Preschool is a 100% fully immersive outdoor program. Through this experience, my daughter has developed a passionate and loving relationship with nature. At the young age of 5, she is able to understand how important our environment is, the endless benefits nature provides, and how it is our responsibility to protect and preserve our community. My daughter has applied what she learns at Notchcliff to our community by picking up litter and speaking to neighbors about the importance of keeping our community clean. She also has developed a strong interest in planting more trees throughout the community and preserving the woods we currently have. I have personally witnessed the growth in my daughter throughout her time at Notchcliff and it is truly remarkable. She is such a smart, kind, and confident child. Attending outdoor preschool has allowed her to have the experience of a traditional preschool with many more benefits and I feel all children would benefit from this experience. By supporting outdoor learning and children cultivating a relationship with the environment, we are investing in our community and will continue to see the benefits for years to come!

I would like for you to please vote in favor of HB376 to establish an Outdoor Preschool Licensing pilot. If you could please be so kind to send a response, my address is 4003 Issacs Road Middle River, MD 21220.

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,

Jenna Tomczewski

Jenna Tomczewski

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4003 Issacs Road Middle River, MD 21220