
2-3-2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Michele Miller, and I am an educator and advocate 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.

I am a Level 1 Nature-Based Pre-School teacher, currently employed in the Baltimore County Public School system. What children need more than ever is the calming effect of nature. There has been so much stress and confusion surrounding them for the last two years, with little or no regard for their mental well-being. Being outdoors helps children relax and be themselves, while running, jumping, and playing games with their peers. The exercise they get outside helps them let go of anxiety, fear, or anger they might be experiencing.

Voting in favor of HB376 will allow parents to give their children the mental and physical benefit of outdoor learning. It is so important for many families to have the choice, and fills a great need for child care in our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB376. My contact information is below. I would love to hear what your thoughts are regarding this matter. I hope that you will support this important effort and vote in favor of HB376!

Sincerely,

Michele T. Miller

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