



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education

## House Bill 376

Outdoor Preschool License Pilot Program – Establishment

Date: February 10, 2022

Position: **Support**

To: Ways and Means, Environment and Transportation From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 376, which establishing the Outdoor Preschool License Pilot Program in the Maryland State Department of Education to license outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care programs in order to expand access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs and to investigate the benefits of outdoor, nature-based classrooms.

### **Research shows that children benefit from outdoor learning at all ages.**

Time outside benefits social, emotional and cognitive development in children, including the youngest learners – the preschool age group targeted by this legislation. A recent article on the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy blog of Columbia University's Teachers College states, "Research has shown that children who spend more time outdoors at school are often more physically active and perform higher intensity activities. Being outside can also improve students' mental and emotional health and overall wellbeing."<sup>1</sup> The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's educational programs are founded in part on the value of outdoor learning. Each year, CBF's Maryland education program serves about 10,000 students and teachers at education sites in Annapolis, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Havre de Grace, and at island sites on the Chesapeake Bay.

This legislation will support additional and enhanced outdoor education opportunities for preschool students through supporting five to ten outdoor preschool programs over a three-year pilot period. An early introduction to nature-based learning will benefit these children, and hopefully spark an interest in future outdoor learning experiences.

### **Outdoor education has demonstrated health benefits and should be accessible to more children.**

Outdoor education is not only a learning opportunity, it also has demonstrated health benefits for students, and there are ways to incorporate outdoor learning into many different curriculums. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation seeks to provide students from across Maryland with outdoor educational experiences, and to reach teachers with outdoor education training. With grant funding, CBF is able to reduce program fees which benefits economically disadvantaged students and schools. This legislation will promote additional access to outdoor education for preschool students by licensing new programs with the explicit intent to expand access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 376.** For more information, please contact Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at [rclark@cbf.org](mailto:rclark@cbf.org) and 443.995.8753.

<sup>1</sup> Apfelbaum, Leora. [COVID-19 as an Opportunity to Increase Access to Outdoor Learning](#), Teachers College, Columbia University, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy blog, September 1, 2021.