

02/3/2022

The Honorable Susan K. McComas

District 34B Harford County, MD

Dear Delegate Susan K McComas:

My name is Christine Meagher and I am a future educator, and current PreSchool 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.

I have personally been dreaming about this coming to fruition! I am an undergraduate student at Towson University, majoring in Early Childhood/Special Education. I am also a parent to a 4 year old. So much research points to how beneficial nature-based programs are for children. How incredible would it be to be the second state in the nation to offer a full day of outdoor school, and even more so incredible to have this option because of the pandemic! Let's get our kids outside again!

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,

Christine Meagher
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Bel Air, MD 21014