

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members:

I am a parent who resides in your district, and I am writing to ask that you vote in favor of HB376 to establish an Outdoor Preschool Licensing pilot. I urge you to support the bill because:

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;

- Many childcare programs in Maryland have closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving a shortage of options for families. Outdoor preschools offer an alternative form of childcare 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.

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

Warm regards,

Fern Shepard

9608 Old Spring Road

Kensington, MD 20895

fern.shepard@gmail.com