

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Tamara Todd and I am a parent and resident of District 10.

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.

During 2020, because of COVID, our family decided to send our 4 year old to an outdoor preschool. We were very happy with this decision, as our 4 year old developed confidence, social skills, and learned to appreciate the natural world. He could expend energy and gain a sense of calm from his interaction with the outdoors. We are now sending his younger brother, now 3 yrs old, to the same preschool. This choice would not be viable to us without the financial assistance of family members. The passage of HB376 would allow this option to be more widely available and feasible for more families. Please let me know your stance on HB376; I do urge you to vote in favor of the bill.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration!

Tamara Todd

221 Northway Rd, Reisterstown MD 21136

tamaratodd15@gmail.com

