



Date: February 7, 2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Karen Jordan and I am a Judy Center Program Coordinator. I live in Huntingtown MD and work in Prince Frederick and Lusby ,MD.

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:

- Outdoor preschool program providers cannot benefit from professional and community partnerships with Judy Centers and other organizations because immersive outdoor preschools currently cannot be licensed.
- Children from low-income communities such as those I serve 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 provide an alternative for kinesthetic learners and 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.

Calvert County opened a new Judy Center in the Prince Frederick area in 2021. One of the goals of the grant was to work with child care providers to increase their awareness of and commitment to the quality rating system (Maryland Excels) set for Maryland child care providers and to collaborate with them to increase their knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood setting. I met a provider who has a good program

but because she could not be licensed, she could not reap any of the benefits that her peers have. I support this bill because nature based programs offer children a project-based learning environment where they acquire knowledge and skills based on real life experiences. It encourages curiosity, critical thinking and creativity, all skills our children need to be successful.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Cordle Jordan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Cordle Jordan

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