

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Amy January and I am a parent in Baltimore County, Maryland. I am reaching out to my local Maryland delegates in support of HB376 with the following letter:

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.

My child has attended an outdoor program for the past year and a half. He has learned valuable social and emotional skills and been able to interact with his peers at a time when many other kids his age have not had the same access to a safe opportunity to do these things. Additionally, there is a large body of research in support of the benefits of spending time outside. My child is fortunate enough to combine outdoor playtime with important social, emotional, and academic learning opportunities. A pilot program, leading to fully licensing outdoor preschools in our state, would give more children and families this priceless opportunity.

Please vote in favor of HB376, providing more children across our state with equitable access to valuable outdoor early childhood education.

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,

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