

February 6, 2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Megan Sullivan and I am a parent and nature preschool advocate 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.

Access to outdoor preschools is important to me as a parent and as a concerned citizen who cares about the environment and climate change. My two sons both attended nature preschool and the education and experiences they received were invaluable. They made connections with the natural environment while learning important skills. They truly thrived in their schools and gained a sense of confidence in their knowledge of the natural world that can't be found in an indoor environment. Outdoor preschool is even more important in this day and age of always

being on screens. It is important for children to be unplugged and tuned in to their environment because if they don't have a connection with the outdoors, they won't be concerned enough to make the important changes needed to take care of the environment and the world around them as they grow up. Allowing more children to have access to outdoor schools, the more connections will be made with nature, the more children grow up to become involved citizens who will be motivated to be agents of change when it comes to issues of climate change and sustainability.

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,

Megan Sullivan

Megan Sullivan

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