

**February 2, 2022**

The Honorable Delores G. Kelly  
3 East Miller State Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot**

Dear Senator Kelly and Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Susan Penix, and I am a community member 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 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.

I believe that it is important for children to have access to quality outdoor nature-based learning opportunities, my own granddaughter attended a program when she was three. However, currently there is no oversight or licensing for these programs, and I personally feel that having a set of licensing standards to help ensure quality and safety is imperative for these programs. The bill is an opportunity to put a pilot program in place and to develop the licensing standards which are so desperately needed for outdoor nature-based programs. I am asking

that you vote in favor of HB376 and look forward to hearing back from you showing your support. My email address is [sgpenix885@gmail.com](mailto:sgpenix885@gmail.com).

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,

*Susan Penix*

Susan Penix

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