

Calvert County Family Daycare Association

2/5/2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Kristina Ganyon and I am the President for the Calvert County Family Daycare Association in Calvert County, Maryland.

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.

While going through college getting my degree in Early Childhood Education and Development, it was always stressed to the students how important play and outdoor play is to the development of these young children. Hands on learning is what our children need to prepare them for school. A nature-based preschool should have the same opportunity to be licensed as a home-based provider or a center, just because the style of learning is different, doesn't mean that the outcome of the children is different. We need to keep in mind that all children learning differently and having a variety of learning experiences gives parents and children options that will meet their needs.

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,
Kristina Ganyon
CCFDCA President