

2 February 2022

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Dana M. Stein  
Lowe House Office Building, Room 251  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

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

Dear Delegate Stein and Ways and Means Committee Members:

I believe you know that I am the Executive Director of NeighborSpace, a land trust improving land inside the URDL with parks, gardens and trails so as to enhance quality of life in older communities. We have a vested interest in getting kids engaged outdoors at an early age, as they are the future stewards of the land we protect, places that, as a qualified land trust, we must protect in perpetuity, which brings me to the matter at hand.

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.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB376. We hope that you will support this important effort and vote in favor of HB376! Please contact me at 443-377-3760 or at [barbara@neighborspacebaltimorecounty.org](mailto:barbara@neighborspacebaltimorecounty.org) if there is anything I can do to help you. With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours



Barbara L. Hopkins, Esq., ASLA  
Executive Director