

February 1, 2022

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Kristy Anderson and I am a parent who resides in Lusby, 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.

My son attended an in-home childcare facility in Calvert County, MD that incorporated a lot of outdoor activity daily. My son struggled with some sensory issues in his pre-school age, being outside, being able to touch, smell, and hear nature in all forms allowed him to face his fears and overcome some of his sensory difficulties. Children thrive being outside with nature. So much learning occurs hands on, rather in front of an electronic device or textbook. This type of learning is just as necessary if not more as your typical workbook style pre-school. There are so many other reasons outdoor preschool's should be licensed just like your "typical" preschools.

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,

Kristy Anderson

ruxpen@hotmail.com

11256 Sitting Bull Circle

Lusby, MD 20657