

January 29, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
91 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1904

Testimony in Support of House Bill 376 (Outdoor Preschool License Pilot Program - Establishment) - Delegate Guyton

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

If not for my outdoor educational experience in school, I would not be in the current field I am today.

I learned about the importance of conservation by taking a middle school class trip to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Fox Island Educational Center, which is on a small island in the Virginia waters of the Chesapeake Bay. The educational center closed in 2019 because of sea-level rise. Learning about protecting the Bay led me to learn how to farm and grow my own food and, eventually, to my current position as the Fair Farms Campaigning Manager for Waterkeepers Chesapeake where I work on promoting sustainable agriculture and conservation. We should be raising a generation of young people who are closely connected to the land and the waters that make Maryland special so they can play a leadership role in their lives in nurturing and protecting them.

If a person wanted to learn how to fix a car, they would practice fixing one in a garage— not just by reading a textbook. The same is true of environmental stewardship. If one wanted to learn about the outdoors, they would need to go outside— not sit in a classroom.

Thank you to Delegates Guyton, Feldmark, Forbes, Henson, R. Jones, Kaiser, Ruth, and Valentino-Smith, their staff, and the stakeholders involved in drafting this bill for leading this effort. If we want to protect the environment for future generations— future generations need to learn about the environment now. Every child should have the opportunity to learn outside; the earlier the better. I urge a favorable report on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Humon Heidarian
humonheidarian@gmail.com