

January 30, 2022
The Honorable Wendell R. Beitzel
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Mr. Beitzel and Ways and Means Committee Members:

My name is Emma Reisinger, and I am a small business owner in Baltimore. My family is from Garrett County; my parents and grandparents live just outside Oakland and I recently purchased the family homestead near the Savage River with my husband's family to spend more time up there. 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.

One of the reasons my husband's family wanted to buy property in Garrett County is so that our six-year-old niece will have the opportunity to be immersed in the outdoors. She is learning to shoot a gun and can start a fire on her own. I am teaching her to recognize edible plants that grow in the woods. I spent a lot of time in my grandparent's woods growing up, and I think that was an extremely valuable part of my childhood, even though I have also developed more modern-day skills such as coding.

Allowing outdoor preschools to be licensed gives families from all backgrounds more choice with their childcare options. Thank you for your time and consideration of HB376. I hope that you will support this important effort and vote in favor of HB376!

Sincerely,

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