
1/31/22

The Honorable Nicholas Kipke

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Emily Wierschke and I am a parent.

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:

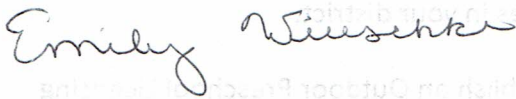
- Children from low-income communities and those with special needs do not have equitable access to State scholarships or special education services and are cut off from the benefits of nature-based early childhood education because immersive outdoor preschools currently cannot be licensed;
- A staggering 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.

From a personal standpoint, my three year old son has been a student in the Magothy Cooperative Preschool Program for the past year. Prior to that, due to pandemic practices and because his father and I are both healthcare workers and directly work with patients battling SARS - COV2, our son has been cared for solely at home by my husband (his father) and myself. From a developmental standpoint, he was found to be behind other children his age in the area of expressive speech language. Magothy is the first exposure our child has had to formal education and consistent socialization with other children. Over the past five months since he started at Magothy, he has transformed into a chatty little boy who loves to come home and tell

us about his friends and adventures at school. The strides he has made in his language skills are massive. He is learning a multitude of things that could not be replicated at home. Without the outdoor aspect incorporated into Magothy's curriculum, it is unlikely we would have felt comfortable exposing our son to the preschool environment, during these unprecedented times of coronavirus.

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,



Emily Wierschke

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