

2/3/2022

Patrick Meagher

Bel Air, MD 21014

RE: Support for HB 376: Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot

Dear Delegate McComas and Ways and means Committee Members,

My name is Patrick Meagher and I am a community member and uncle who resides in your district.

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.

This issue is especially important to me because I have a young nephew who is at the age of preschool next year and I want him to be able to learn about nature to benefit from the mental and physical health that being outdoors can give to young children. I am afraid there is already too much screen time in their lives (and everyone else's to be quite honest!) and being outside and engaging with other students in an outdoor classroom would be extremely beneficial and give them a whole new appreciation for being outdoors. I personally remember my favorite school field trip growing up in Bel Air was to visit the Harford Glen Equestrian center. My siblings and I had so much fun during those trips and appreciating the great outdoors while respecting the earth and learning more about the outdoors in an outdoor type classroom.

I would greatly appreciate it if you voted in favor of the HB376 in order to provide families with alternative options for early childhood education.

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,

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