

**March 20, 2023**

Education, Energy, and The Environment Committee

**RE: Support HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill!**

Dear Honorable Education, Energy, and The Environment Committee:

My name is Marta Potter, and I reside in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

I am writing to urge you to support the House Bill to establish an Outdoor Preschool Licensing pilot. This bill has 13 co-sponsors and tremendous support in counties across Maryland! We need lawmakers to act by passing legislation to expand safe, equitable access to outdoor preschools as another form of high-quality early childhood education.

There are many urgent reasons why we need to pass the Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill:

- All children deserve safe, equitable access and the ability to choose outdoor preschool as an option for high-quality early childhood education;
- Children from low-income communities and those with special needs do not have equitable access to the Child Care Scholarship. Licensing is required for these families to use State scholarship funds to attend outdoor preschool. This is an environmental justice issue and unfair barrier that disproportionately impacts low-resourced families;
- Outdoor preschools offer an alternative that can help expand high-quality early childhood education options. Hundreds of child care programs closed during the pandemic leaving a shortage of child care across Maryland;
- Teachers and programs should be vetted for early childhood credentials, including specific training in health and safety, to operate. Without licensing, there is no oversight of existing outdoor preschools in Maryland; and
- Outdoor preschools promote 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.

I have worked at Tree of Life Preschool for eight years. I come from 40+ years of work as a park naturalist. I bring to the school a love and respect for nature; I have shared my love and respect of nature by offering nature walks, science experiments, and constant enthusiasm for the outdoor world. I have seen a sense of wonder, a sense of appreciation, and respect for nature from the smallest beetle to a large vulture flying overhead grow within all our children. They love being outside at all times - in all weather - discovering what the animals and plants are doing. They like to learn about the importance of how and why everything works. I believe the

outdoor experience and respect for nature needs to be available for all children in Maryland. Even in the urban environment, there is nature. No one should go without this opportunity.

Please help us champion an outdoor preschool licensing pilot by supporting the Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill and urging your fellow lawmakers to do the same!

Sincerely,

Marta Potter  
922 Beacon Way  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
443-758-7307  
Potter.marta2@gmail.com