



Prime Time Children's & Youth Activity Center, 8816 Donald's Way, Owings, MD 20736 301-855-2221 301-855-2146 Fax: 410-257-0996

I am in total support of the House Bill to establish an Outdoor Preschool Licensing pilot, hopefully the ability to have Outdoor Preschool Programs throughout our state.. This bill has 13 co-sponsors and tremendous support in counties across Maryland! We need our lawmakers to act on this very important legislation to expand safe, equitable access to outdoor preschools as another form of high-quality early childhood education.

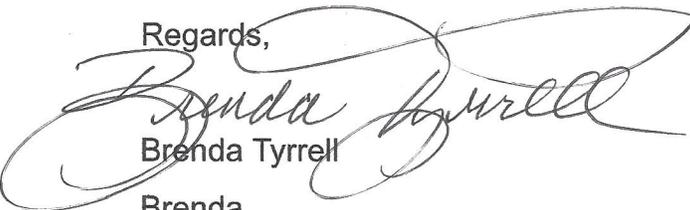
There are many reasons why we need to pass the Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill:

- All children deserve safe, equitable access and the ability to choose outdoor preschool as an option for high-quality early childhood education;
- 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;
- As with any child care program all 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. The state approved and promoted curriculum which focuses on Children Discovering their World has an entire component on things to do outside, we know The University of Maryland and John Hopkins University who developed the curriculum know the value of OPENING THE DOOR TO EXPLORE, we hope you do too.

We have been providing the service of child care as well as before and after school children for 35 years in Calvert County. Our centers have had outdoor classrooms for more than 15 of those years as we believe that taking advantage of the outdoor environment is paramount in our industry. Yes, our programs are unique and certainly were in the early 2000's, but we believe that getting the children outside to play, learn and grow is what a high quality early learning program should include. All research shows that most of the brain is developed in the first 5 years of life and there are only 2000 days between birth and kindergarten, that is when experiencing all we have to offer is our job. You allowing and in fact promoting outdoor preschool programs that soar through a pilot program will only enhance our industry and help to ensure that our children - our future is rich in these experiences as we develop and experience opportunities that are good for our environment and excellent and memorable for our children.

At Prime Time Children's & Youth Activity Centers we spend generally 5 of our 12 hours a day outside. Going from the outdoor classrooms to our trike tracks, our outdoor theater and town. Then on to our swings, slides, sandboxes, gardens, basketball court, field for sports and such, covered and sunny, circled by trees with access behind our fences to nature trails and even bubbles and windows in our fences that give our children access to our neighbors one of which is a sand and gravel company and the other is a storm drain management area that fills and empties with the weather. Taking in sights and sounds of animals, insects and such in their natural environment. Rich and plentiful. Unique and rewarding to any and all children in our program. We do this because we know the value of what outside affords our children. With you promoting it in our state, hopefully others will also see the value in doing the same. Feel free to come and play with us anytime, you too can see why you should pass this bill and do it now, not in 2-20 years.

Regards,



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