
Date Feb 8, 2023

Ways and Means Committee

RE: Support HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill!

Dear Honorable Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Polly Schandorf and I am an parent who resides in Anne Arundel County Annapolis, MD.

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.

My son has had the benefit of being in a Outdoor Preschool program for the last two years. My son has been able to grow so much socially and academically in this environment. The increased outdoor time allows him to get all the big movement he needs to be able to focus during the lesson times in the classroom. He has been able to learn inside and outside of the formal learning environment. He has excelled at math and is really set up for success. When we take a walk at home he is identifying plants

trees and birds, some of which I don't know! He has grown up loving his environment and getting to enjoy the outdoors no matter the weather. I also strongly believe that having lots of outdoor big body movement and learning means that he is more prepared for focused classroom learning time. He is happier, healthier and has further grown his huge love of learning than if we didn't have this Outdoor Preschool. I think the state would really benefit from more Outdoor Preschools.

Please vote in support of this bill.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Polly Schandorf". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Polly Schandorf

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