

Date 2/10/23

Ways and Means Committee

RE: Support HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill!

Dear Honorable Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Chris Marshall and I am a parent who resides in Calvert County, 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.

Little Bugs Nature Preschool, in particular Lisa Poe is our daughter and families hero. The nature schooling she provides our daughter is unlike any early education program.

My daughter who started the program when she was 2 has grown leaps and bounds in every aspect, but especially emotionally, mentally, and verbally. She's learning to listen, be brave, resilient, empathetic, and kind. We believe all preschools like little bugs should be licensed and that you should vote in support of this bill because it would afford anyone the chance to have Lisa Poe as their hero too. She is the most giving, loving, attentive, and creative teacher I know and deserves to have what this bill would afford her.

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,

Chris Marshall

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