



Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

**Testimony in Support of HB 525
“Outdoor Preschool License Pilot Program - Establishment”
Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee
February 14, 2023**

SUPPORT

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) supports HB 525, which would create a pilot program to test changes to child care licensing to allow outdoor preschools to operate as licensed child care programs.

MDAEYC is a professional association of 1,900 early childhood educators, allied professionals, and families. We believe that all children deserve high-quality early childhood education. We support the provision of a broad range of early childhood education programs with a variety of curricula and educational philosophies to meet the needs and interests of children and families throughout our state.

Outdoor preschool programs, when implemented well, can provide high-quality education and care for young children. As early childhood educators, we know the many benefits for young children’s health and development that spending time outdoors provides. Several of the health and developmental benefits to children include:

- Opportunities for science learning, social interaction and collaboration, vigorous physical activity, better sleep and taking appropriate risks to challenge oneself;
- Providing new contexts for learning, developing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills; and
- Connecting children with the real world they encounter outdoors¹.

MDAEYC supports the use of a pilot program to make changes to licensing that permit fully outdoor preschools to operate. We know that child care licensing standards are in place to provide critical health and safety standards that all programs must meet.

¹ Kinsner, K. (2019, May). Rocking and Rolling. Fresh Air, Fun and Exploration: Why Outdoor Play is Essential for Healthy Development. *Young Children*, 74, 2.

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2019/outdoor-play-is-essential>

Changes to licensing should always be conducted with careful review, which the pilot program structure provides.

HB 525 would allow families access to outdoor preschools as an additional form of licensed early childhood education. Creating greater access to outdoor preschool programs while using a pilot program approach to carefully implement and review the effectiveness of licensing changes is a prudent approach that can benefit children, families, and programs. We urge your support of this legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact: Stephanie Schaefer, Program Coordinator, at stephanie.schaefer@mdaeyc.org or 240-441-3280.