

2-11-23

Ways and Means Committee

RE: Support HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill!

Dear Honorable Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Heather Potter and I am an advocate in Anne Arundel county.

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, such as my daughter. 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 daughter was blessed with the opportunity to attend tree of life preschool with her grandmother as a student with a teacher discount, that without it we would not have been able to afford.

Through her time at this school I saw her become independent and brave, educated, loved, and loving. She has faced many struggles through her time as well due to abuse and her father and I splitting up but the one thing that has remained a source of stability

for her has been this school. All children deserve a chance to experience level of support from caring and qualified teachers that go above and beyond to ensure the safety of their students inside and outside of their school walls.

Please vote for this bill to help all children like my daughter.

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,

Heather potter

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