

**2/9/2023**

Ways and Means Committee

**RE: Support HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot bill!**

Dear Honorable Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Brittany Doyle and I am a parent who resides in Prince Frederick 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.

My 4-year-old daughter currently attends an outdoor preschool in Calvert County; Little Bugs Nature Preschool / Muddy Bugs Nature Preschool with Lisa Poe since the fall of 2022. The outdoor program is the highlight of her week. Being able to explore the outside world in a safe environment, all while

learning and making connections with other children her age has been amazing. In the 6 months she has attended I have noticed a profound improvement in her confidence, resiliency and social skills as well as gross & fine motor skills. Each week I am amazed at how quickly she is able to accomplish new skills, most of the time these are skills that I would never think to introduce if it weren't for outdoor playgroup.

Being outside while learning opens up a whole new world of possibilities. Every family should be able to give their child this amazing opportunity, which is why I implore you to help us champion an outdoor preschool licensing pilot vote in support of the HB525 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot Bill, and urging your fellow lawmakers to do the same!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brittany Doyle

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