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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2717

When my partner and I decided to have children, parenting within an intergenerational, interconnected community was our goal. We hoped to foster a buffer and a bridge between this ideal and the underlying urgency of climate upheaval, paired with the disconnection and fear that feeds an overculture of domination. As we thought about how we wanted to raise our children, we realized that grounded nervous systems are able to choose with intention, guided by reciprocity and trust. Oneness with Nature is not something that we teach intellectually, particularly in the early years. We only feel compelled to protect what elicits our sense of "home," not what triggers our fear reactions. Thus, our priority as a family has been to connect our children to the natural world from a place not of fear for its/their survival, but of deep trust in their bodies, in their fellow humans, and Nature itself. This would have been difficult without access to a program where our children could spend their time outdoors.

Outdoor education has led to our children (over the past five years) growing into young ones who are embodied and at home in any weather system, trusting the input of their senses. A stick becomes a tool to connect, conduct, set limits, crutch, explore, balance, protect, and express the full range of human emotions. Their days allow them to move, laugh, tumble, clash, explore, and touch other children in the natural world. Their pace matches that of Nature, including their peaceful moments in the sun, and their storms. They have learned, through the years, that everything changes, that we cleave to what we like and cringe with what is uncomfortable, but that it all passes by. They are infused with the deep rhythms of the seasons: of the light and dark each day, of the weekly offerings, and of the seasonal highlights. When I imagine my children inheriting a world I cannot imagine, I feel deeply sure that this is the best possible way I can prepare them for what is beyond my comprehension, and I want it to be available to every child, regardless of barriers of money, access, or facet of oppression.