

February 24, 2023

Early Childhood and Human Services Committee

**RE: Support HB 2717 Outdoor Preschool Licensing Pilot Bill**

Dear Honorable Early Childhood and Human Services Committee:

My name is Rebecca Wilson, I am a parent, educator, and an advocate who resides in Jackson County.

I am writing to encourage you to support House Bill 2717 to get an established Outdoor Preschool Bill for the current and future children of our state. This bill has support in counties across Oregon and will give the ability to increase capacity and access for families who want to have their child enrolled in our education style. Outdoor preschools offer unique physical, cognitive, and social development benefits unique from a traditional indoor environment. Many families lack the access to outdoor and nature-based education experiences, and these inequities often fall across socioeconomic and racial lines. Licensing outdoor preschools is a simple way for the state to increase availability and create more equitable and accessible early childhood education options for all families. We need lawmakers to act by passing legislations to expand safe, equitable access to outdoor preschools as another form of high-quality early childhood education.

There are many valid and pressing reasons why HB 2717 Outdoor Preschool Licensure bill should be passed:

- Outdoor preschools offer an alternative that can help expand high-quality early childhood education options.
- All children deserve safe, equitable access and the ability to choose outdoor preschool as an option for high-quality early childhood education.
- This is an environmental justice issue and unfair barrier that disproportionately impacts low-resourced families and those with special needs due to access to resources such as Early Intervention or Early Learning Division Expansion Grants. Licensing is required for families to use state scholarship funds to attend outdoor preschool.
- HB 2717 is part of the comprehensive Children's Agenda, with broad support across the entire state of Oregon and with many organizations.

As a parent to a child that thrives in an outdoor setting, regardless of the elements, I have found that the opportunity to attend an outdoor school to be life changing. She has whole heartedly enjoyed her entire experience with school. She is eager to attend and requests school days when there are none. She learns her core educational topics in ways that invite excitement and engage her with her surroundings. They do not use electronic devices to assist in teaching, which is a blessing to me and her father, as well as our child. The outdoor environment invites calmness and prevents overstimulation, to have my child come home from school every day in a good mood and calm is a pleasant experience. As a parent this type of education starting at a preschool level has been amazing and I feel in my mind and heart it

should have the ability to be shared with anyone who has a desire to send their children. A child's education should never be a financial burden to the parent, after all, the thing we want most for our children is to have them thrive.

As an educator I whole heartedly request you to pass HB 2717. I have witnessed firsthand in our Forest School the impacts that having preschool in nature is beneficial for young children and should be more accessible. The developmental benefits that enhance the children's learning experience with being outside in a calm natural environment are amazing. These are basic benefits that all children should have access to and that should not be a burden to the parents or caretakes of the future generation. Being exposed to natural elements, no artificial noises that occur within buildings, objects found in nature, and no artificial light helps young children focus more on learning and developing themselves in a healthy, strong, confident, and naturel way.

Please help us champion for more child education capacity and access by supporting the Outdoor Preschool Licensure bill and urging your fellow lawmakers to do the same!

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Wilson*

Rebecca Wilson

White City, OR 97503