

Submitter: Joseph Flaherty

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2717

Dear Oregon Legislature,

I am writing in support of HB2717. I am the director of a recorded preschool in Cave Junction with a strong focus on outdoor education year-round and in all weather. I have a teaching license, and I worked as a public school first grade teacher for 11 years. I have also worked at Head Start and as a Mount Ashland snowboard instructor. In my 25 years experience working with young children, I have never seen a more beneficial environment to develop social and motor skills than in outdoor natural environments--especially native forests. We are very fortunate in Oregon to be surrounded by the most beautiful parks and natural areas in the world. Our preschoolers know the names of our local bird species, love to balance on logs, and work together. I am very grateful to the inspectors at the Office of Child Care and our advisors from our local Educational Service District, who have encouraged us to pursue outdoor preschool as a license-exempt program in the Illinois Valley. However, the time has come to fully open the potential for outdoor education by offering programs like ours the opportunity to apply for full licensure. A path to a child care license would mean we can legally offer extended days to our families who are most in need of child care. It would also open up funding opportunities that we previously have been ineligible for. Mostly though, passing HB2717 would send a strong signal that Oregon remains a world-wide leader in outdoor education. And that would be something to be proud of.

Backpacks and Smiles

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