



To: House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee

From: Dana Hepper, Children's Institute

Date: Monday, February 27, 2023

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

Chair Reynolds & members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hepper, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Children's Institute. Children's Institute is a statewide advocacy organization. Our vision is for every Oregon child to have the love, care, and education they need.

I am writing in support of House Bill 2717 to establish a pathway to licensure for outdoor preschools.

**This legislation is one piece of addressing Oregon's child care crisis and supporting the healthy development of young children.** We support HB 2717 because:

- Creating a pathway to licensure for these programs will also open the door for outdoor preschools to apply for Preschool Promise and accept child care subsidy - increasing access to these programs for children whose families are income-eligible.
- Oregon is building a "mixed delivery" early childhood system so that families can find the program that best meets the needs of their child. For some children, outdoor preschool will be the best fit.
- 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 Oregon, and outdoor preschool can help reduce child care deserts.

We urge your support of HB 2717 to create a pathway to licensure for outdoor preschools.

Sincerely,

Dana Hepper  
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Children's Institute