

COURTNEY NERON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 26



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of HB 2717

March 1, 2022

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs H.Nguyen and Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,

For the record, my name is Courtney Neron and I am the State Representative for House District 26.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on a bill that will **include outdoor child care programs in our definition of “child care facility” and open up our outdoor programs to licensure, funding streams and more equitable access to early education and care** for littles across our state.

Currently, there are only enough available preschool seats for 20% of Oregon’s young children. Allowing licensure for outdoor preschool programs will incentivize growth of existing programs and the creation of new programs, which will help us address this shortage.

And, while there are outdoor preschool programs in our state, they are only allowed to operate for half days because they are unlicensed. **HB 2717 with the -1 amendments creates a path to licensure for outdoor preschool programs, allowing them to operate for full days and opening up access to federal funding that is only available for licensed outdoor preschools.**

Kids need access to the outdoors and this bill provides a pathway for expanded outdoor early learning programs. It is a natural solution for Oregon, where **we are so fortunate to have so many amazing natural areas in and near each of our communities that we can leverage for high quality early learning opportunities.** The bill has great potential to positively impact the lives of our children.

While the base bill required an entirely new license, I would like to encourage committee members to review the **-1 amendments for HB 2717 which will simplify implementation of this legislation. The -1 is our preferred path forward.** We have

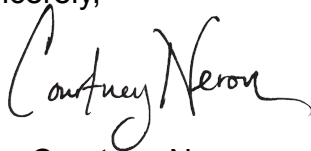
worked in partnership with the Oregon Health and Outdoors Initiative coalition and the Department of Early Learning and Care to craft this amended policy that will add outdoor preschool programs to an existing license type.

As an educator and parent, I also want to highlight the **social and emotional learning** opportunities and rich **sensory experiences** that outdoor education can provide for our youngest children. **Confidence, curiosity, and problem-solving** are just a few of the many lifelong qualities and skills that can be enhanced by high quality early outdoor education. There is even research showing that outdoor play **improves sleep** in children ages two to five, and we know that better sleep can enhance **brain development** for children.¹

In closing, I want to share a few **remarks from my son**, who is now in middle school, but who reflected on his time in an outdoor emphasis preschool years ago. When I told him about this bill today, **I asked what he liked about his outdoor preschool experience** and he immediately said **“I really liked exploring.”** He then offered, **“The fresh air was really nice”** and then added **“and it’s really important for kids to be outdoors and get exercise.”** I agree.

Thank you so much for your consideration and I urge your support of HB 2717.

Sincerely,



Rep Courtney Neron

House District 26

Wilsonville, including the Charbonneau district, King City, Sherwood, Tigard/Bull Mountain, and Parrett Mountain

¹ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2019/outdoor-play-is-essential>
<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/children-s-sleep-linked-brain-development#:~:text=Scientists%20have%20long%20recognized%20that.childhood%20can%20benefit%20developing%20brains.>