

Bill: Senate Bill 317

Title: Frederick County – Career Exploration and Development Activities – Coffee

Position: SUPPORT

Date: February 18, 2020

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Contact: JP Smith, Teacher, Frederick County Public Schools

Good afternoon my name is JP Smith and I am a Special Education teacher for the Learning for Life Program at Frederick High School. The students that are in our program encompass varying disabilities that have had significantly impacted how they learn. One thing they have in common is that all our students will be earning a Maryland Certificate of Completion and not a High School Diploma. The goal of our program is to provide our students with the skills necessary to be productive citizens after they leave us and walk into the real world. Some of the ways we prepare our students for this reality is to practice on job training skills that are of interest to them.

Now that you have a brief background on our program, I can explain how this bill can help us help our students achieve their goals. In previous years we have sold coffee to staff in the morning. We called it the “coffee cart”. It started off as a task our students could consistently complete with minimal adult support. As we continued the program, we saw that our students began completing these tasks independently. We also noticed that they were able to measure amounts of coffee, count out cups, work together, stock items, buy items, clean equipment and finally interact with staff and peers in the hallways. We noticed how much our students enjoyed the task and began to make friends in the school that they normally wouldn’t have. When we started seeing this progress, we decided to try expanding it to students as well. We started selling hot and iced coffees to students during lunch. The interaction our students had was amazing. They also learned how to interact with individual customers and take orders. They were able to run a basic register, stock and clean the coffee table. Overall our students began making so much progress towards not only transitional goals on their IEP but also social and communication goals. The students that were serving the coffee started showing interest in working at local restaurants and coffee shops. We even started looking to partner with local coffee shops to teach our program how to make coffee consistently and other equipment they use. During this time, I found out that we could not sell coffee to students due to a regulation saying the coffee could not

be sold in high schools to students during school hours. After this we shut down the program and shifted our students to other vocational jobs and activities. We started researching and saw that another high school in Baltimore County had the exact same problem. Then we found out that an ACT was passed called the JAVA ACT that allowed the sale of coffee in conjunction with a career exploration and development activity in a public high school in Baltimore County. I brought this to administration and long story short I am here in front of you explaining why we are speaking to you now. I want to say that it can sound silly to think it's just coffee but after multiple semesters and months of trying other items this is what works best for our students in the long run. I want to thank you for listening and hope that some of our student's testimonials can also help explain the impact it had on them.