

COMPTROLLER

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OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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February 11, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair  
House Ways & Means Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
House Office Building, Room 131  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis MD 21401

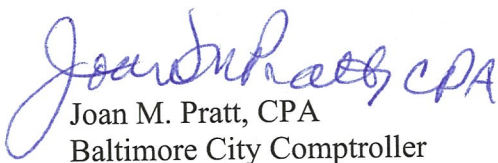
Dear Chairwoman Kaiser:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 548, “Career and Technology Education—Training in Soft Business Skills,” which will be heard by the House Ways and Means Committee on Friday February 14, 2020. House Bill 548 would expand the requirements for Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs in public schools to include certain skills, in addition to technical skills, that will aid students in securing and maintaining sustainable employment. Specifically, this bill would require CTE programs to include instruction in areas such as business etiquette, oral and written communications, customer service, and group work techniques including conflict resolution and social awareness in the workplace.

In my position as Baltimore City Comptroller, I frequently speak to groups of students and adults about how they can prepare for career success. As an elected official for the last 24 years and a small business owner for most of my adult life, I understand the importance of soft skills as an essential ingredient to professional success. In Baltimore and elsewhere, CTE programs are effective at closing the opportunity gap because they allow young people and mature workers to secure high-paying jobs in growing industries without the time and expense of a college degree. While technical knowledge and training may be sufficient to land an initial job, thorough understanding and practice of soft skills is essential for advancement in any workplace setting. Requiring CTE programs to teach soft skills will help to prepare today’s skilled workers to be tomorrow’s managers and business leaders.

For all these reasons, I urge the Ways and Means Committee to give House Bill 548 a favorable report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in greater detail, please contact me at 410-396-4755.

Sincerely,

  
Joan M. Pratt, CPA  
Baltimore City Comptroller

# HOUSE BILL 548

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By: **Delegate Stein**

Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2020

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Career and Technology Education – Training in Soft Business Skills**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring career and technology programs in public schools to provide  
4 training in certain soft business skills; and generally relating to career and  
5 technology education.

6 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

7 Article – Education

8 Section 21–203

9 Annotated Code of Maryland

10 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

11 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

12 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

13 **Article – Education**

14 21–203.

15 Career and technology programs in the public schools shall:

16 (1) Offer a sequence of academic and occupational courses[,] AND career  
17 development[, and work experience] OPPORTUNITIES to ADEQUATELY prepare students  
18 to [begin] SECURE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT, EXCEL IN THEIR careers, and [to] pursue  
19 lifelong learning; [and]

20 (2) Integrate academic knowledge [and], occupational competence, AND  
21 PROFESSIONAL WORKPLACE SOFT SKILLS to enable students to develop [the] critical  
22 thinking, problem solving, employability, COMMUNICATION, INTERPERSONAL, and  
23 technical skills [required to meet the workforce preparation and economic development

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 needs of the 21st century]; AND

2 (3) INTEGRATE INTO THE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM TRAINING AND  
3 EXPOSURE IN SOFT BUSINESS SKILLS, INCLUDING:

4 (I) EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS AND  
5 RESPONSIBILITIES;

6 (II) GENERAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE;

7 (III) SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE;

8 (IV) GROUP WORK SKILLS, INCLUDING ACCOUNTABILITY,  
9 CONSENSUS BUILDING, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION;

10 (V) APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL ORAL AND WRITTEN  
11 COMMUNICATION SKILLS;

12 (VI) PUBLIC PRESENTATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS;

13 (VII) PROJECT PLANNING; AND

14 (VIII) USE OF COMMON BUSINESS TOOLS SUCH AS E-MAIL,  
15 SPREADSHEETS, WORD PROCESSORS, AND PRESENTATION SOFTWARE.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
17 1, 2020.