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The Maryland House of Delegates
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Testimony of Delegate Dana Stein in Support of HB 548

Career and Technology Education – Training in Soft Business Skills

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chairman Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

This bill requires that Career and Technology (CTE) classes integrate what’s known as “soft skills” into their programs. Currently, CTE courses focus on the “hard skills” necessary for a particular career; for example, programming, database administration, and web design for the Information Technology courses.

Soft skills are critical career skills that are essential to everyone’s success, regardless of career path. These skills include written and verbal business communications; meeting, email and interpersonal etiquette; social awareness, employer expectations of employees, project planning, basic email and spreadsheet skills; conflict resolution, consensus building and how to advance in the workplace.

The support letters from the business community demonstrate how much businesses value these skills. Support letters are from the Greater Baltimore Committee, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable and the Maryland Center for Construction Education.

When I introduced this legislation last year, the Kirwan Commission recommendations were pending, and a decision was made to wait to see if Soft Business Skills were part of this year’s legislation.

HB 1300 does have many provisions to make students more career ready. However, it does not include a provision requiring inclusion of Soft Business Skill

in CTE programs. The CTE Skills Standards Advisory Committee that is established under the bill seems to focus more on occupational skills standards.

I've requested an amendment to HB 1300, which would include Soft Business Skills into the section regarding Career and Technical Education.

The benefits of teaching these soft skills are enormous for both students and employers:

- 1) Students will be better prepared for the world of work and have more success obtaining jobs.
- 2) Students will be better prepared for the apprenticeships and career tracks envisioned by the Kirwan Commission.
- 3) Students will experience fewer early career failures that often lead to frustration and chronic unemployment.
- 4) Students will move more quickly from entry-level jobs into higher-paying supervisory and management positions
- 5) Students will benefit because businesses will create more positions for students who can be productive without an extensive training period
- 6) Businesses will benefit by having a large "work ready" population
- 7) Businesses will benefit by having increased productivity and reduced training expenses.
- 8) Businesses will be more likely to increase the available apprenticeships to help reach the scale envisioned by the Kirwin Commission

Other states have adopted similar legislation for these skills in recent years and others have special recognition for courses taken in these skills (see attached). It is clear that this is an area of concern for businesses that needs to be addressed in our schools.

I would ask the Committee to either approve HB 548 or the amendment to the Kirwan bill that I will be proposing.

SOFT BUSINESS SKILLS REQUIRED IN OTHER STATES

Legislation Passed to Require Soft Business Skills

Colorado SB272 (2017) <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb17-272>

CDE judges schools by academic growth, assessments, progress made in closing growth and achievement gaps, and *postsecondary and workforce readiness*. This bill requires State BoE set achievement standards indicating minimum achievement levels.

Indiana SB297 (2018) <http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/0/6/f/e/06fefe81/SB0297.05.ENRH.pdf>

Requires “interdisciplinary employability skills standards”

Kentucky HB3 (2018) <https://legiscan.com/KY/bill/HB3/2018>

Requires essential skills curriculum to students

Arkansas (2019) <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/jun/09/state-s-school-standards-adding-social--1/>

Adds “personal competency standards” through “G.U.I.D.E for Life” introduced by the Arkansas BoE which basically encompasses soft skills.

Recognizing Soft Skills in Other States

Georgia

<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/career-seals.aspx>

Diploma seal recognizing soft skills program completion

A lot of information on CTE across states is found in Association for Career & Technical Education’s annual “State Policies Impacting CTE: Year in Review”:

2019

https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/State_Policies_Impacting_CTE_-_2019_Year_in_Review_Final.pdf

2018

https://www.acteonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/2018_State_CTE_Policy_Review.pdf#page=5

2017

https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017_State_eCTE_Policy_Review.pdf

2016

https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2016_State_Policy_Review.pdf