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Delegate Anne Kaiser
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee, House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Jeffrey Jerome in Support of House Bill 548

Career and Technology Education – Training in Soft Business Skills

My name is Jeff Jerome, and I am Chairman of the CTE STEM Program Advisory Committee for Baltimore County Schools. In my role, I have seen firsthand how the inclusion of Soft Business Skills into Baltimore County's CTE programs has already improved student outcomes.

House Bill 548 is a revised version of a similarly titled bill that was introduced at the last session. Major advocates like the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Baltimore Committee, the Business Roundtable as well as many educators enthusiastically testified for and supported this bill. As it is Valentine's day many of these organizations are unable to appear in-person today but have filed strong letters of support. In fact, in the year since we first introduced the legislation, I have not met one person either in business or academia who doesn't agree that these critical skills are extremely important for success in today's world.

So, with all of this support, why didn't this bill move forward?

1. Some school systems wrote letters saying that the bill was not necessary as they were already implementing this training. Rather than being an objection, the fact that some school systems are already implementing Soft Skills education actually just confirms the validity of the concept. While there has been some implementation of resume writing and interview skills under "employability" the vast majority of these skills are not covered by MSDE or proposed Kirwan legislation as shown in the attached Exhibit A.
2. Other school districts wrote letters objecting to the possibility that we were legislating curriculum. In fact, rather legislating curriculum, the bill proposes that Soft Skills education be integrated whenever possible into the CTE curriculum already being taught in the schools. Section 3 of the bill, which was primarily included for informational purposes to help define Soft Skills, may be omitted from the final legislation, if necessary, to avoid the perception of legislation of curriculum.

3. While the previous objections were noted, the overarching reason that the bill did not move forward was that the committee wanted to wait to see the proposed Kirwan legislation. Now that the Kirwan bill, HB1300, has been drafted, we find that it is completely silent regarding Soft Skills.

In response to the aforementioned items we believe HB 548 should be considered on its merits this year. However, as mentioned, Delegate Stein has proposed an amendment to HB 1300 that would incorporate the essence of this bill into the Kirwan bill language.

The introduction of the HB 1300, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future means that this is absolutely the best time to introduce the concept of Soft Skills to our education system. Failure to implement this legislation at this time may mean that we miss the opportunity to include these essential skills.

We urge the committee to consider amending HB 1300 with the language proposed above. We also urge the committee to move HB 548 forward, (perhaps with some modifications to section 3) to assure inclusion of these essential Soft Skills in the event that HB 1300 does not move forward.

Thank you!

Jeff Jerome

Chairman, Baltimore County STEM Program Advisory Committee

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Exhibit A

Draft Career Readiness “Soft Skills” Learning Objectives

BCPS PLTW STEM Program Advisory Committee

Contact Jeff Jerome, 410-905-0543

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The following soft skills are not specified in Title 13A, the MSDE Career Development Framework or the Kirwan Commission HB1300.

Understanding Employee/Employer Relationships

Individual responsibilities

Arriving on time and calling-in

Drugs and alcohol

Company property

Privacy

Employer responsibilities

Employee classifications (salary, hourly, contract, etc.)

Adhering to job descriptions

Wages and benefits

Maintaining a healthy work environment

Business Etiquette and Communications

Writing appropriate internal and external business communications

Email etiquette

Meeting scheduling and preparation

Meeting etiquette

Understanding how to dress for business

Public Speaking

Building consensus

Negotiation skills

Customer service skills

Social Awareness in Business

Understanding the team nature of the workplace

Understand business rules for working with others

Diversity, inclusion and appropriate workplace behavior

Social awareness and Emotional Quotient (EQ)

Learning to manage conflict

Project Planning

Project Planning Concepts
Phases of a Project
Managing a Project team
Project Planning Tools (Gantt Chart)
Project Reporting

Business Tools/Computing

Passwords and data protection
Basic Email
Recognizing malware
Basic word processing
Basic spreadsheets
Basic PowerPoint
Google search strategies

Advancing in the Workplace

Meeting your manager's expectations
Performance reviews
Internal and external networking
Leadership skills
Managing others
Moving on to a new position