

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-R-58

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA, OPPOSING SB 104 OR SIMILAR LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ALLOW FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE OPTION TO TAKE COMPUTER CODING COURSES TO SATISFY TRADITIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSE REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND ALL OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, Senate Bill (SB) 104 has been filed for consideration during the Florida Legislature's 2017 session by Senator Jeff Brandes (R – St. Petersburg); and

WHEREAS, SB 104 would permit high schools to provide students with opportunities to take two credits in computer coding courses that, along with the earning of a related industry certification, would satisfy two credits of sequential foreign language instruction, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year; and

WHEREAS, the bill would also require Florida College System institutions and state universities to recognize such computer coding credits as foreign language credits; and

WHEREAS, SB 104 would further require students and parents to sign a statement acknowledging and accepting that a computer coding course taken as a foreign language in a Florida high school may not meet out-of-state college and university foreign language requirements; and

WHEREAS, a computer coding course taken as a foreign language in a Florida high school may not meet foreign language admission requirements of Florida's private institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, while SB 104 does not mandate that Florida high schools allow students to take computer coding courses to satisfy foreign language requirements, this bill may nevertheless negatively impact the education of high school students and decrease their chances for success in college and beyond by providing that option; and

WHEREAS, House Bill (HB) 265, as originally filed by Representative Elizabeth Porter (R – Lake City), would have similarly permitted high school students to take computer coding courses to satisfy foreign language credits; and

WHEREAS, however, HB 265 was amended at committee to remove any mention foreign languages and now addresses how the Florida Department of Education can better promote computer science learning in Florida’s public schools; and

WHEREAS, traditional foreign language courses enable students to understand, speak, read, and write in world languages, which is critical to students’ success in a global society and to ensuring that they become well rounded individuals; and

WHEREAS, the study of a second language has been linked to improved learning outcomes in other subjects, enhanced cognitive ability, the development of empathy and effective interpretive skills, and a delay in certain manifestations of aging; and

WHEREAS, in addition, students who learn foreign languages are often at an advantage in the job marketplace, where foreign language proficiency is valued by employers; and

WHEREAS, in contrast to traditional foreign languages, computer coding languages are not used to communicate directly with other people or to connect with the history and culture of other people; rather, they are used to communicate with computers and other devices; and

WHEREAS, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has noted that computer coding “cannot be used by people to interact and negotiate meaning with other people,” cannot be used to learn “culture through language,” and “does not express thoughts or feelings” in the way that traditional languages do; and

WHEREAS, while both traditional foreign languages and computer coding courses may be needed, neither is a reasonable replacement for the other, and awarding credit in foreign languages for a course that is not truly a foreign language could create the false impression that the two are one and the same; and

WHEREAS, Miami-Dade County Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho stated in reference to a similar bill filed for consideration during a prior legislative session, “[w]e cannot approach the importance of computer science and foreign language as an either-or proposition,”

and “I absolutely disagree with the proposition that computer coding is an equal substitute – an equal and necessary substitute – for foreign language”; and

WHEREAS, as Carvalho emphasized, “[b]ased on both educational, intellectual development, and emotional development – as well as long-term economic development in an increasingly bilingual and biliterate community – computer coding is not a trade-off”; and

WHEREAS, with its proximity to Central and South America and its stature as an international tourist destination, Florida’s importance in the global economy make the teaching of foreign languages essential to ensuring that students are afforded the opportunity to be competitive in the job marketplace and successful in their chosen careers here; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation does not address minority group demands for greater access to education in languages, as expressed in The Miami Times and The Miami Herald by Stephen Hunter Johnson, Chair of the Miami-Dade County Black Affairs Advisory Board, and the joint statement from civil rights organizations League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Florida, the Florida Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Branches, and the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD) of opposition to legislation that “deceives our students, jeopardizes their eligibility to admission to universities, and will result in many losing out on the foreign language skills they desperately need even for entry level jobs in South Florida”; and

WHEREAS, according to a McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) Report entitled The World at Work: Jobs, Pay and Skills for 3.5 Billion People, 40 percent of job growth in advanced markets like the United States is going to foreign nationals because of language skills and cross-cultural competency that Americans lack; and

WHEREAS, SB 104 may contribute to this problem and do a disservice to Florida’s students by allowing computer coding classes to be taken in lieu of foreign language courses; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami strongly oppose SB 104 or similar legislation that would allow Florida high schools to provide students with the option to take computer coding courses to satisfy traditional foreign language course requirements.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA:

Section 1. Mayor and City Council Recommendation. The Mayor and City Council hereby SB 104 or similar legislation that would allow Florida high schools to provide students with the option to take computer coding courses to satisfy traditional foreign language course requirements.

Section 2. Direction to City Clerk. The City Clerk is directed to transmit certified copies of this resolution to the Governor, the Senate President, the House Speaker, Senator Jeff Brandes, the Chair and Members of the Miami-Dade State Legislative Delegation, the Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education, and the Miami-Dade County School Board and Superintendent.

Section 3. Effective Date. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by a 5 - 0 vote of the Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami, Florida, this 25th day of April, 2017.

DR. SMITH JOSEPH
MAYOR

ATTEST:

MICHAEL A. ETIENNE, ESQ.
CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM
AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

JEFF P. H. CAZEAU, ESQ.
CITY ATTORNEY

SPONSORED BY: COUNCILMAN DESULME

Moved by: Galvin

Seconded by: Desulme

Vote:

Mayor Smith Joseph, D.O., Pharm. D.
Vice Mayor Scott Galvin
Councilwoman Carol Keys, Esq.
Councilman Philippe Bien-Aime
Councilman Alix Desulme

X (Yes) _____ (No)
X (Yes) _____ (No)
X (Yes) _____ (No)
X (Yes) _____ (No)
X (Yes) _____ (No)