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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) community:

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) leadership is aware of an incident that reportedly took place on Dec. 3 at a local Charles County restaurant. A group of 11 students and seven staff members visited the Cracker Barrel in Waldorf as part of community-based instruction (CBI) and was refused service. Students enrolled in regionalized programs participate in CBI regularly to practice generalizing skills they are learning in the classroom in the community. Some of these trips include visits to local retail and restaurant locations.

Prior to the Dec. 3 visit, CCPS staff notified the establishment of the planned visit, including how many were in the party, and shared the CBI purpose of the visit. CCPS staff was reportedly told by restaurant staff that no reservations were necessary. Upon arrival, the students and staff were declined service and asked to no longer include the restaurant on its CBI list. The group was able to place a carry-out order.

CCPS staff spoke to the restaurant's district manager today about the incident to obtain more information and express concerns about why the students and staff received a reported refusal of service.

CCPS staff members in the office of special education offered to work with restaurant officials to provide training in disability awareness for its employees. Restaurant officials have also indicated that they are available to speak with the parents of the students who visited the establishment. CCPS also hopes that restaurant officials will agree to the establishment serving as a work-based learning site for CCPS students.

Our students and staff are our No. 1 priority, and we are disheartened to learn about the alleged treatment they received while participating in an activity designed to educate our students using real-world applications. The alleged treatment of CCPS students and staff at Cracker Barrel is one that no one should experience. However, it is encouraging to learn that the district manager said the business would be willing to work with CCPS to do better.

CCPS staff is pleased to hear that other retailers and restaurants have reached out to offer their locations as future CBI sites, with open invitations for CCPS students. I want to thank our staff for their swift action in reporting this incident, supporting the emotional safety of our students and keeping our families updated. We look forward to hearing from Cracker Barrel.

Sincerely,

Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools