

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF DINING SERVICES
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

1150 South Campus Building
College Park, Maryland 20742-8411
301.314.8054 TEL 301.314.9764 FAX
www.dining.umd.edu

Erik Rosenbaum
University of Maryland
4103 Ellicott Hall
College Park, MD 20742

Re: Proposal for Transparency in Campus Diner Food Production (Senate Doc. No 15-16-24)

Dear Erik,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the semester.

Vice President Clement recently shared your proposal entitled "Proposal for Transparency in Campus Diner Food Production" (Senate Doc. No. 15-16-24) with me for comment and possible action.

I have carefully reviewed the proposal and have shared it with the Dining Services Advisory Board (DSAB) of The Residence Hall Association (RHA) as well. While I appreciate your interest in this aspect of our program, neither I nor the DSAB are in favor of continued action on this bill. In fact, DSAB took a vote of possible support for the proposal and the vote did not pass. Here are some details (in no particular order) to highlight the concerns I have with your proposal:

Magnitude of the requested information

I am unaware of any restaurant or food service operation in the country that provides the level of transparency that this proposal is calling for.

To provide the level of detail requested we would be printing thousands of pages of information from our menu management system, from our purveyors' websites and from our nutritional data base on a daily basis. Our menus change daily – and, it is conservative to say that we have 6,000+ recipes in our data base and we serve hundreds of menu options at any given meal period. This information could not be displayed in any reasonable way in our dining halls – there is simply not enough space to post these pages of information. I also do not believe students would be inclined to read through the details called for in this proposal. Very few students availed themselves of our nutritional kiosks when we added them to our dining rooms many years ago.

Our practices

Dining Services has clear and consistent purchasing practices, incorporates Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems in its food production cycle and follows all Prince George's County Health Department guidelines in our day-to-day operations. We believe in transparency and we are happy to work with students who want to learn more about the "how's and whys" of what we source and how we cook our menu items. We encourage students to learn about the food system and how food gets from farm to fork through our Green Dining programs such as the Farmers Market at Maryland, Terp Farm, community gardens, and numerous educational programs.

Our Assistant Director for New Initiatives, Allison Lilly, regularly meets with students who want to learn more about our buying practices or a particular menu item or meal. I'm not aware of any previous outreach by you to our department, but we would certainly welcome the opportunity to meet with you now and answer your specific questions. We can (and do) look at individual menu items or recipes on a case by case basis, but we cannot do so globally, as your proposal indicates.

Cost Implications

Dining Services does not have the manpower to act on this type of proposal. Given the ever-changing recipes, menu, suppliers and ingredients we use, at a minimum we would need to hire 2 people to manage the data bases and prepare the signage that would be shared with students. Our information would be in line-by-line page form – it would take significant effort to transform that information into an appropriate message/content that students might, but likely would not, read. We estimate the cost to implement this proposal at approximately \$250,000 annually for staff support, print material and miscellaneous costs. In addition, we might incur charges from our purveyors because we would need to require the same transparency of them on every item we buy to comply with this request. Purveyors (like us) have that information available when needed on a case by case basis, but I am unaware of any purveyor who could provide the level of detail for all of their items.

Erik, Dining Services believes this is an unreasonable proposal and one that would not benefit students in any significant way. Rather, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to learn more about your concerns and to answer your questions – just as we have done with many students over the years who want to learn more about our practices. And, please be assured we will continue to work with the DSAB, the Sustainable Food Committee, interested student groups, and concerned students to identify feasible ways that Dining Services can continue to improve our information sharing as it relates to the food served on campus.

Please feel free to reach out to Allison Lilly at alilly@umd.edu or me at cwr@umd.edu if you are interested in meeting with us to learn more about our purchasing practices.

Sincerely,



Colleen Wright-Riva
Director,
Dining Services

CC – Reka Montfort, University Senate
Linda Clement, Vice President for Student Affairs