



September 22, 2017

Support from Code.org for Ohio HB 170

Code.org is a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to computer science in K-12—especially for female students and underrepresented minority students. We are known best for our annual Hour of Code, which encourages people all over the planet to spend just one hour learning a few fundamentals of coding. The event reaches tens of millions of students, teachers, local, state, and national leaders—and general members of communities in over 180 countries each year. But the Hour of Code is just the beginning—only a taste of what computer science has to offer. And it’s only one small part of a larger effort to expand access to essential skills that put more students on the pathway toward career-readiness.

Nationally, there are almost 500,000 open computing jobs—14,202 are in Ohio. Yet last year, Ohio had only 1,137 computer science graduates. Half of the highest paying jobs in the U.S. require coding skills. If more Ohio students graduated with key computing skills, Ohio could create an enormously attractive market for business. In addition to being a core component of success in college, computing a key skill in most jobs; 7.7 million jobs use *complex* computing.

At present, Ohio law does not require any computing skills or computer science courses before graduation. The current technology requirement goes only as far as keyboarding and building proficiency with basic computer applications. It stops short of teaching students fundamental skills such as logic modeling and coding. Substitute House Bill 170 aims to change that by giving more students access to the computer science skills they need to build careers.

The legislation is helpful not because it mandates changes in the way schools operate, but because it provides for development of clear learning benchmarks for all Ohio students who choose to take computer science courses, reduces barriers to taking computer science by making sure students can get meaningful credit, and supports teachers who want to add computer science to their teaching portfolio.

To expand access to high quality computer science, we have identified three essential components of state policy: development of quality K-12 learning standards, professional development for teachers, and access to at least one course in every high school in the state. While Substitute HB 170 stops short of the last of the core components of quality, it makes essential progress by advancing standards and supporting teachers. And it goes a step further to provide for improvements to core infrastructure that enables CS teaching and learning.

Code.org strongly and enthusiastically supports Substitute HB 170 because it offers a strategic and thoughtful approach to creating the opportunity for every student in Ohio to have access to high quality computer science education. We encourage adoption of the measure and further encourage continued dedication to expanding access to teacher professional development that will help scale access to more students across the Buckeye state.

Respectfully submitted by Katie Hendrickson, Code.org and Sarah Silverman, Whiteboard Advisors.