House Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony on HB 96
Code.org
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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee: my name is Julia Wynn, and I'm the Director of State Government Affairs for Code.org, a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to computer science education for every student in every state. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of the Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition's budget priorities: 1) maintaining funding for the Teach CS program, 2) adopting a computer science graduation requirement, 3) appropriating $300k for the CS District Playbook, and 4) adding an extension of the computer science teacher licensure waiver to the budget. I will be focusing my testimony on the computer science graduation requirement, which was a consensus recommendation of the State Committee on Computer Science in 2022.

Technology and computing touches every aspect of our lives. Today, learning about the Internet, algorithms, data analysis, and computational thinking is just as important to understanding our world as civics or algebra. But currently, we require no foundational knowledge of these concepts. This presents a serious gap - a gap of skills that are only becoming more relevant, and are key to keeping Ohio competitive as a hub for innovation and investment. Updating Ohio graduation requirements to include computer science will ensure students gain the digital knowledge they need to be successful in our world today.

Ohio's workforce is urgently demanding these skills. Over 140 Ohio CEOs have signed a letter urging policymakers to prioritize computer science. They cite its critical value in *all* modern industries - from agriculture to manufacturing to finance - not just tech. The CEOs note that the prevalence of AI makes learning computer science even more relevant. Over a quarter of current jobs require "highly digital" skills and two-thirds of the 15 fastest growing jobs are computer science or AI related. This subject is essential for career-readiness in an AI-driven economy.

But computer science is good for students too. Studies have shown that students who take computer science perform better on math and reading assessments, excel at problem solving, and are more likely to enroll in higher education. Initial research also shows being exposed to high quality computer science raises students' earnings and likelihood of being employed at 24.

Nearly a dozen states across the country, including Ohio's neighbor Indiana, have realized these benefits and enacted computer science requirements. Even globally, countries with some of the highest GDPs per capita - like China and Japan - who are

also leaders in technology - require computer science for all k-12 students. This subject is key to Ohio's continued competitiveness in the global economy.

There is significant flexibility built into the amendment language that enables schools to implement the requirement with fidelity. The proposed amendment requires one unit of computer science, taken in any of grades 8-12, starting with the 2032 graduating seniors. The language provides:

- a seven-year runway that allows plenty of planning time for schools
- schedule flexibility by allowing the course to be taken as a math, science, foreign language, or elective, fitting it into existing requirements as much as possible
- the ability for schools to offer computer science virtually if needed, or through a partnership with an ESC, and
- explicit language allowing CCP courses and programs provided by community colleges to count towards the requirement.

Ohio has 61% of high schools already offering computer science, and states with lower percentages have passed graduation requirements and were able to obtain sufficient teacher capacity to implement them. Nevada had only 57% of schools offering the subject when its requirement was passed, and within two years, it had 83% of schools offering the course. A similar two-year increase of 23% was seen in South Carolina. The 2022 Report of the State Committee on Computer Science also pointed out that "*...the most challenging barriers for CS expansion, including the shortage of teachers, may be impossible to remedy without a graduation requirement, as high schools hiring practices tend to closely follow state requirements.*"

Computer science opens doors of opportunity for students. Passing this policy will not only ensure Ohio remains economically competitive, but will ensure every Ohio student - regardless of background - gains the digital skills necessary to be prepared for success. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.