House Finance Committee
March 12, 2025
Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition
Interested Party Testimony on HB 96

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for accepting testimony on HB 96 from the Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition, a diverse group of organizations representing industry, K-12 education, higher education, and the nonprofit sector that recognizes the value of computer science both for Ohio students and the state's economy.

The Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition strongly supports continuation of the Governor's proposed $8 million for the Teach CS program in the state budget, in addition to the following proposed budget amendments:

1. Extending the computer science teacher licensure waiver through 2032
2. Enacting a computer science graduation requirement
3. Funding a CS District Playbook at $300,000

Computer science has become an essential part of a well-rounded, modern education. In our digital world, understanding concepts like the Internet, algorithms, and debugging is just as important as learning civics

or algebra. The prevalence of AI makes computer science even more critical, as computer science concepts are key to AI literacy. Investing in K-12 computer science will help fill in-demand jobs, and help Ohio position itself as a leader on critical technology education.

Even beyond serving a workforce need, computer science offers students concrete benefits. Computer science teaches students computational thinking, problem-solving, and data analysis, skills that are not only relevant for every career, but that show students how to think creatively about any problem. Regardless of the career path a student chooses, computer science can help students thrive in professional life.

Despite the urgent need for digital skills, Ohio has ***one of the lowest percentages of high schools offering computer science in the region***. At 61% of high schools offering, ***its rate is lower than West Virginia (78%), Kentucky (76%), Indiana (91%), and Pennsylvania (75%)***. Further, the latest data available shows only [3.6% of Ohio students](#) are actually enrolling in computer science in any given year, and access to these courses is not equal among all student groups and schools. While 98% of large high schools offer computer science, only 47% of small schools do. Rural schools are also less likely to offer computer science (56%) than urban (62%) and suburban schools (70%).

In past budgets, the state has made strong, incremental progress in supporting computer science. Now Ohio must continue to build on this momentum in order to close remaining gaps in access and ensure all students can take advantage of the opportunities computer science offers. **The Coalition respectfully requests that the House consider supporting the following provisions in HB 96:**

1. **Extend the Computer Science Teacher Licensure Waiver through 2032**
This is the most important provision the Coalition is requesting. Historically, in each budget, the Legislature has renewed the waiver allowing a teacher who completes professional development for a particular computer science class to teach that class without a full license. This is always a bipartisan and uncontroversial issue. The Coalition is requesting that the Legislature again renew this waiver, this time through 2032, so that schools have certainty that they can use this flexible, alternative endorsement option through multiple budget cycles.

2. **Maintain the Governor's Proposed $8 Million for the Teach CS Program**
Teachers are the top resource needed to grow educational offerings. Computer science, although critical, is still a newer subject that continues to require state support. The $8 million appropriated for this program in the last budget has reached hundreds of teachers in its first year, with more expected to be impacted as reporting from providers continues. The proposed FY 2026-2027 Teach CS Program funds can be used on coursework, materials, exams, teacher stipends, performance-based incentives, or other programs to support teacher licensure, certification, and professional development. This flexibility will ensure schools' varying needs are met. Renewing the Teach CS Program will maintain the momentum of the first round of grants and allow the number of licensed computer science teachers to continue to grow.

Thirty-five states have a continuing budget appropriation for computer science, and we hope Ohio remains part of this group through the FY 2026-2027 budget cycle. The Teach CS program has already shown

return on investment for the state. We urge the Committee to support its continuation to ensure Ohio can remain competitive in providing students with critical 21st century skills.

3. Require All Students Take a Unit of Computer Science To Graduate by 2032

The Coalition requests the Legislature enact Recommendation #3 from the [Report of the State Committee on Computer Science](). Until Ohio ensures every student in the state learns computer science, workforce needs in Ohio's most in-demand industries will continue to go unmet, and access to 21st century technology education across the state will continue to be uneven. The timeline recommended for implementing the requirement provides ample space for planning and preparation by school districts. Without a computer science graduation requirement, Ohio risks losing ground to surrounding states in the race for an ever-diminishing talent pipeline, and students risk getting left behind in the digital age.

4. Fund a "CS District Playbook" at $300,000 in FY 2026

The Coalition requests the Legislature enact Recommendation #8 from the [Report of the State Committee on Computer Science]() by funding the creation of comprehensive resources for school districts on implementing computer science. Select school districts representing different populations will receive funding to collaboratively create best practices around progression of courses, staffing and scheduling, curriculum and technical asset management, professional learning and industry-aligned academic pathways. ODEW may competitively select a vendor to create a budget for the project, oversee coordination of participating districts, and ensure the playbook is publicly available by June 30, 2027. Funding the creation of a "Playbook" of CS resources for school districts will provide much-needed direct support to districts who are still struggling to offer this newer subject. The Playbook will ultimately help guide the scaling and implementation of strong computer science programs statewide.

Thank you for your consideration of the Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition's recommendations.