

**House Finance Committee
Computer Science Teachers Association Testimony
Sub HB 96**

Thank you committee members for allowing me to speak about HB 96. I am here to respectfully request an extension of the CS Teacher Waiver in the omnibus bill.

My name is Shant' Coaston and I am a Computer Science Teacher at Westlake High School, in Westlake, Ohio. I am the Vice President of the Computer Science Teachers Association for Ohio, as well as the 2024 District 11 Ohio Teacher of the Year, and State Finalist.

I have been working with our youth for over 2 decades, and in no way, shape or form, would I have believed it, if someone told me that I would be in a classroom teaching Computer Science - a subject that I absolutely love. My journey is not the standard teacher path, where I went to school for education, focused on Computer Science, but here I am. I was a Youth Counselor with a non-profit, then a School Based Therapist, a Special Education teacher, and now CS. It is clear that this path is not a straight one, but one that has built me for the work that I do. It was 8 years ago as a Special Education teacher at Shaw High School, in East Cleveland, who was asked if I would want to teach this subject. I said "Yes", completed an intense Summer Professional Development, and then I applied for a waiver that allowed me to teach an exploratory course. That 1st summer was rough, and the 2nd one, well, let's say I made it!! And it allowed me to teach AP Computer Science Principles. That first year, I realized that Computer Science was a gateway for students to become successful in a career field they never thought possible.

The waiver allowed me to continue to teach Computer Science, as well as Special Education at the Alternative School. I even used Computer Science with students at the alternative school as a way to complete missing credits, through critical thinking skills, robotics, and coding classes. My time on the waiver allowed me to get more training, become a CSTA Fellow, train other CS teachers, become the Martha Holden Jennings award winner, write and analyze CS curriculum, as well as speak across the country about Computer Science. Very few teachers have a computer science background, but this waiver gives us the time we need to study for and pass the Computer Science exam so we can deliver more high-quality Computer Science experiences to our students.

This waiver has been essential to not only my professional and academic improvement,

but to the betterment of the students that I have reached, through Computer Science. I was able to earn my CS Endorsement three years ago, through the help of Teach CS Grant and CSforCLE. All the students I reached in the time I was on the waiver, would never have had experience with computer science if not for the waiver.

Without this program, there will be an even bigger hurdle in teaching students because there are no certified staff to teach them. It is imperative that the Teacher Waiver program continue, because it gives teachers time to prepare for the CS enrollment and take the needed courses, as well as providing the school district with a teacher that is able to teach it with the proper credentials. To give schools more certainty than they've had in the past with just two-year extensions, we are asking that the Legislature extend the waiver through 2032. One again, as someone who used the waiver to educate students, this was the lifeline that I needed in order to become a fully certified CS teacher in the state of Ohio. CSTA fully supports an extension of the CS teacher licensure waiver.

Thank you.