Senate Education Committee
Interested Party Testimony on HB 96
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Thank you, Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee. I'm here in support of the Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition's budget priorities: funding the creation of a CS Playbook, adding licensure exam grade banding for computer science, and retaining from the House bill the permanent extension of the CS teacher licensure and $8 million for the Teach CS program.

I stand before you today not just for the students of Ohio, but because of them. As a 33-year veteran of public education, I never imagined I would teach Computer Science. My passion was Language Arts—until nine years ago, when a day called "Hour of Code" changed the course of my career. This fun and interactive experience was an instant hit with my sixth-grade students. They were engaged and eager to keep learning. Soon, they were asking to stay in for recess to "do code." I realized then that this content was different. It made kids hungry to learn.

I'm not alone in seeing the excitement and value of computer science for Ohio students. Many teachers share my passion, but too many are discouraged by the current one-size-fits-all K–12 licensure exam. My K–8 colleagues are expected to master high school-level content that doesn't reflect what they actually need to teach. This takes valuable time away from developing the age-appropriate skills their students need.

I personally know elementary educators who refuse to take the licensure exam—not because they lack the will to teach CS, but because they fear being reassigned to high school positions. This is a major barrier, and it's keeping qualified and willing teachers out of our CS classrooms. As of May 2024, Ohio has just over 3,000 licensed Computer Science teachers—compared to more than 5,100 licensed Physical Education teachers. This gap makes it clear: we need licensure exams that align with established licensure bands. Please support our amendment to require that ODEW create separate K-5 and 6-12 CS licensure exams.

Another key component is the Computer Science Playbook. This will give schools a clear and equitable roadmap for implementing K–12 CS. Right now, access to CS depends on where you live. The Playbook will help level the playing field so that all students—not just those in a handful of lucky zip codes—have access to these essential opportunities.

In my district, Reynoldsburg City Schools, we've spent the past two years building a K–12 Computer Science Pathway. We've learned firsthand that offering CS requires coordinating many moving parts—curriculum, scheduling, staffing, and more. Our progress has been slow. A statewide Playbook could have saved us time and helped us align with other districts. Schools haven't had to implement a brand-new subject in decades. They need support to do it right.

I'll end by voicing my strong support for the House-passed permanent extension of the CS teacher licensure pathway. This is essential for finding educators who, like me, started in other subjects but discovered a passion for CS. Without a flexible pathway to licensure, it will be difficult to grow the CS teaching force we need. This extension ensures we can keep bringing CS to more classrooms across the state.

Thank you for your time and for considering these important priorities for Ohio's students, teachers, and future workforce.