



***Office of Instructional Excellence
and
Center for Computing Education & Instruction***

Testimony of Dr. Debbie Jackson

Vice Provost for Instructional Excellence & Executive Director, Center for Computing Education & Instruction

Proponent Testimony – Senate Education Committee | May 14, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in strong support of Ohio’s continued investment in computer science education—specifically, requesting that the Senate fund the creation of the CS District Playbook and retain the House’s extension of the CS teacher licensure waiver, both of which were central recommendations in the Report of the State Committee on Computer Science in 2022.

My name is Dr. Debbie Jackson, and I serve as Vice Provost for Instructional Excellence and the Executive Director for the Center for Computing Education and Instruction at Cleveland State University. I have spent the last decade building computer science capacity in partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) and national initiatives like the NSF-funded Expanding Computing Education Pathways Alliance. In this time, we’ve prepared over 100 teachers, launched computer science courses in every CMSD high schools, and created summer learning and internship opportunities for students with partners like Tech Corps, Cleveland Clinic, KeyBank, Sherwin Williams, and others.

I had the honor of serving on the State Committee on Computer Science, which was charged with developing Ohio’s long-term vision for expanding CS access. Through many months of discussion, it became clear that two of the most urgent and practical needs were: establishing a licensure waiver to reduce barriers for qualified teachers entering the CS classroom, creating grade banded CS licensure pathways, and developing a statewide CS Playbook—a district-driven resource to guide implementation in schools that want to offer

CS but don't know where to begin.

The CS Playbook is not a theoretical document. It is designed to help districts—from rural to urban to suburban—learn directly from their peers how to sequence courses, staff programs, align with workforce needs, and deploy the right technology. We saw in our committee deliberations that many of the Ohio districts that don't yet offer CS simply lack a roadmap. The Playbook would provide that roadmap and ensure that our collective progress is sustainable and scalable.

Another key recommendation from the State Committee on Computer Science—one I strongly support—is the creation of grade-banded licensure exams for computer science teachers. Currently, Ohio's licensure exam for CS spans K–12, requiring even elementary teachers to demonstrate mastery of high school-level content to be certified. This misalignment presents a significant and unnecessary barrier to expanding foundational computer science instruction in the early grades. By aligning licensure with the grade bands used in other subjects, Ohio can support a more inclusive, scalable teacher pipeline and help ensure that students begin building computational thinking skills as early as possible.

As for the licensure waiver, our own work at Cleveland State has shown that there are passionate, capable teachers ready to lead CS classrooms—but they are often held back by rigid certification pathways. The waiver has provided a flexible, responsible on-ramp for teachers who complete meaningful professional development while they pursue full credentials. This is not just a stopgap; it is a proven strategy that has already expanded CS teaching capacity across the state. Extending this waiver permanently, as the House has done, is a logical and necessary step.

This summer CSU will host 300 high school students and 300 middle school students in work-based learning internships on campus and throughout the city of Cleveland. These summer experiences complement and extend what is possible in the K-12 classroom, but only if districts have the resources and teachers have the licenses to teach computer science.

Taken together with the Teach CS grants, CS Promise, and funding for these CS initiatives, these policy elements form a cohesive vision for making Ohio a national leader in computer science education.

These aren't just investments in curriculum—they're investments in workforce readiness, education, and the future of our economy. Thank you for your attention and for your ongoing leadership in this work. I'd be happy to answer any questions.