

# Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition

## **Senate Finance Committee**

**May 28, 2025**

### **Ohio Computer Science Advocacy Coalition Interested Party Testimony on HB 96**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Julia Wynn and I'm the Director of State Government Affairs at Code.org, a national nonprofit focused on expanding access to computer science and AI education. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of 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. We are supporting amendments to fund the creation of a CS Playbook and add grade banding for computer science teacher licensure exams. In addition, we ask that you simply retain from the House budget bill the permanent extension of the CS teacher licensure waiver and \$8 million for the Teach CS program.

To start, I want to highlight why it's important to focus on computer science. Computer science helps prepare our students for success, fill in-demand jobs, and position Ohio as a leader on career-aligned education. Computing jobs are growing at a rate of 10x other jobs, and over 70% of business leaders now report they've incorporated AI into some business function. Understanding computer science - including computational thinking, data analysis, algorithms, AI, and more - is no longer a luxury. Not only does it support the talent pipeline Ohio needs to remain competitive as an economy, but students who take computer science have been proven to achieve higher scores on reading and math tests, and earn higher salaries.

#### **Fund the Creation of a CS District Playbook (SC 0252)**

A Computer Science District Playbook was one of the ten consensus recommendations of the 2022 State Committee on Computer Science. The Playbook would be a public, comprehensive collection of resources for school districts on implementing computer science created by districts for districts. ODEW would convene the districts over the next two years to create the Playbook, creating a community of practice among participants. By bringing school leaders together to create best practices for their peers, we can leverage the knowledge of trailblazing districts instead of attempting to recreate the wheel. Ohio is behind almost all of its neighbors in high school access to computer science, and that's because the 39% of districts not yet offering it need guidance on how to do so. This Playbook will ensure the sustainability of this critical 21st century subject into the future.

#### **Add Grade Bands to the CS Teacher Licensure Exam (SC 0546)**

Currently, the licensure exam for computer science teachers is a K-12 exam, which does not align with other subjects nor the grade bands established in law. A K-12 exam requires all

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teachers - even those only intending to teach elementary-level computer science - to understand advanced high school concepts to pass this exam. This is an unnecessary barrier to expanding teacher capacity in foundational early grades, and we request support for an amendment that would require ODEW to create separate k-5 and 6-12 exams to remove this barrier.

## **Retain the Permanent CS Teacher Licensure Waiver**

We also want to emphasize the importance of retaining House language making permanent the CS teacher licensure waiver. This waiver is a commonsense, uncontroversial policy that has been renewed with bipartisan support in every two-year budget since 2020. Used by dozens of teachers every year, this waiver allows teachers who have completed professional development to teach computer science while they work towards earning a full endorsement. This flexible pathway helps ensure sufficient teaching capacity in schools. If a waiver extension is not included in the final version of the budget, it will expire on June 30th, and many teachers will immediately become ineligible to teach computer science. We urge you to retain this House provision.

## **Retain \$8 Million for Teach CS**

Computer science, although increasingly critical, is still a newer subject that continues to require state support. Many schools need an incentive to prioritize this over other required subjects. Although we can't pay teachers more for certain subjects in high demand by employers, we can as a state incentivize teachers to become qualified in computer science by supporting training and certification costs. We request that you retain the Governor and House's recommended \$8 million to support computer science teacher capacity in Ohio. The state has an interest in investing in computer science teacher capacity because the more students who graduate with computer science skills, the more economically competitive Ohio becomes and the stronger our 21st century workforce pipeline is. Computer science is an issue of regional competitiveness, and the \$8 million appropriated for this program is a critical downpayment in Ohio's future.

Thank you for your consideration.