



February 12, 2020

Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Helt and Alonso Leon, members of the committee:

On behalf of our organizations, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic. Businesses across the state value Oregon's public education system and support efforts that increase access to skill development that will serve students well as they transition from school to career. Under this principle, we offer our strong support for HB 4098-1. As this Legislature made clear last year with the passage of the Student Success Act, education is a shared priority and as business leaders, we encourage the kind of investment outlined in this bill.

Computer science, and digital literacy in general, has been identified by large and small businesses across sectors as an increasingly necessary skill in our dynamic workforce. Many of our state's emerging industries already require entry-level employees to possess some form of digital fluency and in fact, jobs in these fields are consistently higher wage and in higher demand both in Oregon and throughout the country. Oregon currently has 4,808 job openings in computing. Roughly 67% of all new jobs in STEM are in computing fields with an average salary of \$89,697.

We also know that these fields have traditionally lacked diverse representation, which has impacted our underserved students the most. This bill will work to dismantle those systemic barriers and provide a detailed, structured support for districts that ensures all students have access to the skill development they need to be successful upon graduation. When all Oregon's students are better equipped to enter our workforce, the economic benefits are magnified.

We also support the adoption of the -1 amendment, which will allow the Department of Education to draw on the expertise of industry leaders through partnership with the STEM Investment Council, which is responsible for recommending the state's STEM Education Plan to the Department of Education and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Digital literacy is a core part of STEM education and thus a priority focus of the Council. We also appreciate that the amendment clarifies that digital literacy standards should be aligned with computer science courses offered at postsecondary institutions.

We applaud Rep. Hernandez for bringing a broad coalition together and we are eager to participate in and support the conversation around how we can best improve student outcomes in digital literacy.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Brown, Oregon Business & Industry
Kyle Ritchey-Noll, Oregon Business Council
Stefan Bird, Chair, CTE-STEM Employer Coalition