STAND | OREGON
for children

Our mission is to ensure all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially those whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability.

February 12, 2020

Dear Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Helt, and Members of the House Education Committee,

We support HB 4098 because it will help lay the foundation for a statewide strategic plan to provide computer science education opportunities to every student in Oregon by the 2025-2026 school year.

Computer science education is becoming more and more essential as our world and economy evolves.

Demand for computer science across the U.S. is high – 90% of parents want their children to learn computer science (Gallup Research Study, 2016); but fewer than half of high schools in America actually teach computer science. Additionally, most students have to wait until high school to access computer science.

According to the 2019 State of Computer Science Education Report on Equity and Diversity (Code.org), here's what Oregon's data looks like:

- In the 2017–2018 school year, 37% of high schools taught at least one computer science course, compared to 31% in 2016–2017.
- 32 schools (14% of schools with AP programs) offered an AP Computer Science (CS) course in 2017–2018, which is 7 more schools than the previous year.
- 184 female students (24%) took an AP CS exam in 2018, compared to 86 (20%) in 2017.
- Only 66 students from underrepresented communities (9%) took an AP CS exam in 2018, compared to 34 (8%) in 2017.
- Of the 834 bachelor's degrees in computer science were earned in 2017 – 19% were female.

When we limit access to computer science education, we hamper students' opportunities for growth and advancement, especially students from underrepresented communities.

HB 4098 can help change that by organizing a statewide plan to: set clear goals and learning standards; remove barriers to these computer science learning opportunities; ensure equitable access to courses and pathways across the education system; and develop the workforce.

With a boost and support in computer science education, Oregon's students could go on to earn a job in computing which makes an average annual salary of $89,697 (much higher than the state average). Right now, there are 4,808 open computing jobs (and counting) which represents a $431,261,830 opportunity in terms of total annual salaries.

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Please support HB 4098. Developing a long-term, statewide strategic plan is an important step forward in ensuring that students, especially students from underrepresented communities, can access – and advance in – computer science at all levels (K-12, post-secondary, and the workforce); this plan can also support Oregon in diversifying who teaches computer science, and who works in the broader field of computing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Parasa Chanramy
Policy & Implementation Director