

Testimony to Oregon Senate Committee on Education

February 5, 2025

Chairman Frederick & Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Terry Whitney, Senior Director, Government Relations & Advocacy for College Board.

The College Board, as a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college and career success, welcomes the opportunity to share comments on SB 541. We fully support this legislation and the foundational impact it will have for Oregon students as we've seen in numerous states across the country.

College Board enthusiastically supports SB 541.

An education in computer science and coding—the tools with which the future is being built—has been out of reach for too long for too many students across the country. That is why College Board applauds Oregon for its comprehensive efforts to support computer science education – starting with former Governor Kate Brown’s May 2022 executive order calling for ODE and HECC to collaborate in the creation of a statewide implementation plan. As she noted in a letter to Directors Gill and Cannon, “Successful completion of a STEM credential or degree is critical for students pursuing careers in high-demand, high-wage STEM fields. Technology and software are the fastest-growing job clusters in Oregon, with 52,000 new jobs in these high-technology fields projected to be created by 2029. In order to meet this demand, more Oregonians will need to possess relevant STEM skills, talent, and credentials.”

We were privileged to have partnered with Andrew Cronk, former Computer Science Specialist for the Department of Education, Code.Org, numerous subject matter experts and numerous educators over the last year plus to assist with the work to develop a coherent strategy for how more students can participate in computer science education.

College Board is committed to ensuring all students have access to and participation in challenging computer science coursework that prepares students for college and career. Our most recognizable contribution to expanding computer science access is through our two AP computer science courses. We have offered Computer Science “A” for decades, however, in 2017 following a partnership with the National Science Foundation we launched AP Computer Science Principles or “AP CSP” with the specific determination to *change the invitation to computer science education by engaging traditionally underrepresented students*. We undertook this work after reviewing years of data indicating that CSA courses were typically 90-95% male enrollment.

College Board has also endorsed curriculum and professional development delivered by a limited number of organizations to ensure that schools and teachers have high-quality options for implementing AP Computer Science Principles. We believe the steps we've taken with AP CSP will continue to complement Oregon's efforts for computer science education and ensuring educators have the tools they need to teach challenging coursework.

Further, our latest research findings for AP CSP underscore the importance of the state's efforts to expand computer science access to this course and others.

- * The College Board finds students who took AP CSP in high school were more than 3 times as likely to major in computer science in college, compared to similar students who did not take AP CSP.
- * These results held true for female, Black, Hispanic, and first-generation college students.
- * In fact, Black students who took AP CSP then majored in computer science at a higher rate (nearly 20%) than students from any other racial/ethnic group.
- * AP CSP students are nearly twice as likely to enroll in AP Computer Science A (CSA)—a more programming-focused course—than students who did not take AP CSP, thus notably reducing AP CSA race/ethnicity enrollment gaps.
- * Black students who take AP CSP are three times more likely to take AP CSA, virtually the same share as Asian CSP students, who have long led AP CSA participation.
- * AP CSP may serve as a stepping-stone to other advanced STEM coursework. For the class of 2020, more than half of the students who took AP CSP were taking their first AP STEM course. The number of Black, Hispanic, and first-generation students was even higher.

Our broader team has been working nationally on helping multiple states (Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, North Carolina, Tennessee) and districts find ways to help more educators teach computer science courses and we're excited about the ongoing opportunity to partner with you and the ODE team to be thought partners.

In closing, we would recommend that the bill include an annual reporting requirement to the education committees of the legislature to ensure the statewide plan is being implemented with fidelity and to ensure that necessary funding remains in place for critical components like teacher training, professional learning and course resources.

College Board looks forward to seeing the progress Oregon will make in expanding computer science access over the coming years, especially for the students who have been traditionally underserved in the subject with the passage of this important and timely legislation.

Sincerely,

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