



Testimony of Ed Leavy
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Raised Bill #1129:
***AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE
COMPUTER SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL TALENT IN EDUCATION.***

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
April 29, 2019

As president of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, I am proud to represent the over 1200 educators in the technical high school system. It is on their behalf I provide this testimony.

Raised Bill #1129 is similar in nature to Senate Bill #957, which AFT CT opposed when it was brought before the Education Committee on March 8. First, the bill mandates that computer science be required as a distinct area of instruction, in the same manner as physical education, art, social studies, and others. This requirement would be in effect July 1, 2019 and thus must inform the 2019-2020 school schedule. While the goal of the bill is noble – clearly, all students need to be computer literate – it would be very difficult to implement practically within that time frame. Most schools are well into the process of developing their schedule for next year and would not be able to adjust it to account for a new requirement for next year. Moreover, as Connecticut seeks to provide multiple pathways for student success and create magnet schools that specialize in specific areas, adding another required class makes scheduling impossible. In the technical schools which I represent, the new world language requirement has proven impossible to implement: students simply do not have the time in their school day to reach the hours needed for the apprenticeship or licensure in their trade, receive the math and literacy support necessary for success, and also have a full year of a language. The district does not have the funds to hire 17 world language teachers; where will we find the funds for additional computer science teachers. Other schools that have specific areas of instruction are facing the same problem; funding should be dedicated to their mission, but the additional requirements force to spend their resources elsewhere.

A secondary problem with timing is with the teacher preparation programs requiring a course in computer science. Students who are set to graduate with a degree in education in December of 2019 or spring of 2020 will suddenly discover they have another required course, possibly pushing their graduation back an entire semester. At the least, the requirement should be for all students entering the teacher prep program after July 1, 2019, not graduating from it. It is also unclear why a full course in computer science would be required for a music teacher, a world language teacher,

or in the case of our system a plumbing teacher. It seems to be a requirement that's intrusiveness far exceeds its value.

The most objectionable provision in Raised Bill #1129 is Section 4, which creates an "adjunct instructor" position for computer science instructors. This tiered certification plan is a path we cannot go down. Once we begin with an adjunct certification for computer science, what prevents us for doing the same for art, for technical education, or for subjects not yet considered? We do not know if instructors with adjunct certifications will fall within the collective bargaining agreement. We do know the bill specifically prevents them from being part of the Teachers' Retirement System. Even the use of the term "adjunct" brings to mind our post-secondary system, where adjunct professors can barely sustain themselves on their wages, there is near constant turnover, and the universities much prefer to employ adjuncts to tenured professors to hold down wages. Such a plan leads inexorably to the de-professionalization of teaching. We have seen what happens in states such as Kansas and Wisconsin when the standards of the profession are shrunk to hold down the salaries and benefits: qualified teachers leave the state, and educational outcomes suffer. This bill sets the groundwork for that process.

There is no question that computer science is important for our children. This bill, however, ignores the implications of its own proposals. I must stand firmly opposed to Raised Bill 1129.