Bill No.: SB-1129
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE COMPUTER SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL TALENT IN EDUCATION.
Vote Date: 5/1/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 4/29/2019

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

**REASONS FOR BILL:**
This bill would promote computer science education in elementary, middle and high school students and broaden the requirements for certification for computer science teacher positions.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**
None

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Subira Gordon, Executive Director of ConnCAN**
Ms. Gordon states that smart investments in computer science education and career pathways are necessary to ensure Connecticut kids can compete for tomorrow’s jobs. She also notes that Connecticut is already falling behind our neighboring states when it comes to post-recession job growth. She feels that if we fail to have a workforce that is adequately prepared to fill jobs being created, our state’s economy will never catch up.

**Shannon Marimon, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)**
Ms. Marimon testified in support of the initiatives promoting a computer science education especially with an emphasis on providing access to low-income, minority students and that
any state-level talent development strategy include stakeholders beyond higher education, inclusive of public K-12 education. One concern of the CCER is ensuring this legislation extends its benefits inclusive not of overall learning, but also, in the long term, to student loan forgiveness and income tax credits to low-income, minority populations.

**James Mersfelder, Goshen, CT**

Mr. Mersfelder testified in support of the initiative to make computer science education a priority in Connecticut. He stated that we need a commitment to fund the computer science initiative which would make it available to all students, with ongoing professional development provided to teachers. He strongly supports the establishment of the Computer Science Commission and would recommend that it include business persons working in related start-ups and established companies.

**Susan Palisano, Director of Education & Workforce Development – Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.**

Ms. Palisano testified in support of the addition of computer science and programming instruction in the State’s public K-12 education system. She stated that Connecticut is in need of qualified computer science educators and that the organization further supports the provision regarding pre-service teacher preparation and the qualifications of the instructors. She urged the legislation to include tax credits for employers that provide apprenticeship training in both manufacturing and computer programming.

**Norman Sondheimer, Connecticut Chapter of the Computer Science Teachers Assoc.**

Mr. Sondheimer testified in support of making computer science education a priority in Connecticut. He questioned the timeframe of the initiative, along with the requirements to teach the curriculum. He stressed that the State Department of Education should “identify” appropriate curriculum material, as teaching material for computer science is continuously evolving.

**Jennifer Widness, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)**

Ms. Widness testified on behalf of CCIC and their support of the bill. She stated that Connecticut is projected to provide enough technology talent for only 35% of the projected computer jobs in 2022, therefore Connecticut must adopt an aggressive approach to expand our tech talent to meet the workforce needs. The CCIC also supports the appointment of a Chief Talent Officer that reports to the Governor on producing the workforce to meet the demands of the state’s employers. They are concerned with the timeframes of the initiative.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.**

While the Association feels that the goal of the bill is laudable they expressed concerns with the mandated time frame of July 1, 2021 for every school district to be in compliance with the computer science initiatives. They also are concerned that there will not be enough
employees in their current position who might contemplate a career change to sufficiently help to meet the demand.

**Ed Leavy, President, State Vocational Federation of Teachers**

Mr. Leavy states that while the goal of the bill is noble it would be difficult to implement practically within the timeframe proposed. He states that the most objectionable provision of the bill is the creation of the “adjunct instructor” position for computer science instructors and how they would fall within the collective bargaining agreement. According to Mr. Leavy 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?

**Glenn Lungarini, Executive Director of the CT Association of Schools**

Mr. Lungarini states that CAS-CIAC is opposed to the bill due to (1) the restriction in elective credits a high school student will be able to take due to prescriptive legislation on curriculum mandates; and (2) the fiscal responsibilities that will be placed on school districts.

**Marianne Maloney, J.D., Chief Steward, New Haven Federation of Teachers & Instructor of Mathematics, New Haven Academy**

Ms. Maloney stated that New Haven is not financially able to hire nor has the extra personnel on staff to address new course offerings. She stressed that urban teachers are far more in need of additional training in trauma effects, classroom management, cultural awareness, and bilingual/SPED than they are of computer programming. Another concern is the serious fiscal consideration. She states that as the budget constraints continue the availability of hardware/software is a problem because their tech equipment can neither be repaired or replaced.

**Reported by: Dawn Silveira**

**Date: 5/7/19**