

March 17, 2021

Joint Education Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100  
Hartford, CT 06106

Regarding Raised Bill No. 1033: AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY AS PART OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Dear Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, and Members of the Joint Education Committee:

My name is Shawn Draczynski Tobin and I am a public school educator residing in Torrington, CT. I currently additionally volunteer as the CT Computer Science Teachers Association (CT CSTA) Secretary and Elementary Grade Band Advisor.

I would like to thank you for your raised bill that will help make high school computer science courses explicitly count towards the nine credits needed for high school graduation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). While the current proposal is a step in the direction for this inclusivity in terminology, it would be better to codify into law "For purposes of education, science, technology, engineering and mathematics includes computer science" to clarify that computer science is a STEM subject. This would allow for the existing legislature to continue without altering the current graduation requirements for the class of 2023 and beyond.

There is evidence that computer science is not assumed to be a STEM course. To avoid confusion the U.S. Department of Education STEM homepage is titled: "Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, including Computer Science." Other U.S. Department of Education contribute to the confusion by referencing them separately, e.g., "U.S. Department of Education Announces STEM, Computer Science Education Grant Opportunities." For NASA, the National Science Foundation and several other agencies and departments, Federal Public Law 114-59: The STEM Act of 2015 clarifies the issue by stating that "the term "STEM education" means education in the subjects of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including computer science."

Codifying this language into law for Connecticut would allow for opportunities for students and let schools expand their computer science education opportunities. While there is concern over what could be removed from core content requirements, this is adding opportunities to the STEM pathway while giving students additional choice for what constitutes a STEM credit.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this matter.

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