

## **SB 1033 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY AS PART OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.**

Good Morning Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1033 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY AS PART OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS today.

In the 2017 legislative session the General Assembly enacted PA 17-42, new graduation requirements to be effective for the class of 2023 and beyond. As described, these new graduation requirements were to afford greater rigor by increasing the number of credits and greater flexibility by removing specific courses, with some guardrails maintained through the use of subject “buckets” and other required credits; such as World Language, PE, and Health. The implementation of which was a 4 year roll up.

To change those same credits upon the same students who are now in 10<sup>th</sup> grade is problematic for several reasons:

- 1) This proposal shifts the philosophy of “Voice and Choice” and creating multiple pathways to meeting graduation requirements back to a more prescriptive form mid-stream.
- 2) The classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 have already chosen classes for next year.
- 3) For the class of 2023 this would leave only their senior year to complete these 2 full credits.
- 4) The amount of staff that would be needed to fulfill this requirement doesn’t currently exist while the budget for next year has already left the table.
- 5) The proposal ties these two credits to the STEM bucket of requirements, does not remove any other requirements, and are therefore, by default, supplanting credits.
- 6) You are then making students forgo either a 4<sup>th</sup> year of Math, a 4<sup>th</sup> year of Science, any Engineering, or any remaining opportunity for electives they may want or need as a part of a culminating sequence they have already started and engaged in to be replaced by these 2 full credits.
- 7) The computer science requirement of 1 credit is not defined. What computer science are you referencing? There is not a computer science course. Are you referring to AP Computer Science, AP Computer Science Principles, Programming, Computer Assisted Design 1, 2, or 3? Would instruction delivered through computer assistive technology meet this requirement for some of our special education students? Many of these courses are .5 credit courses. They are not 1 credit. Are you therefore requiring districts to re-write curriculum to make them 1 credit or are they able to be combined to equal 1?
- 8) Personal Finance is a .5 course. Are you requiring, through the language of this bill, in section 1 to re-write that course into a 1 credit course?
- 9) Staff: The volume of staff that your districts would need to hire to run enough sections for all of your 2023’s and even 2024’s would add significant FTE counts to the 2023 budget. There is already a state identified technology education teacher shortage. Who is teaching all of these

sections to meet this requirement and is this staff available for all districts? One district would require an additional 5.6 FTE for the computer science requirement and 4.8 for the Finance requirement, which would be over a million dollars, not including any curriculum work. If they were .5 credits each, cut that amount of staff and dollars in half. Neither these staff nor dollars exist.

**Sec. 2:** States an effective date of July 1, 2022, but then cites 2021 in the text of the section. Is it 2022 or 2021? Embedding these requirements across other courses is the better path that would not supplant other courses or add FTE. It would still require re-writing other courses however, to ensure the time requirement is met and that those courses are taken. This is not a simple task either and will require time and funds to do so.

**Any change to graduation requirements needs to be rolled up by applying them to whichever class is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and below at the time of the proposal,** and not put upon those high school students already in place who have determined their sequences based upon the existing graduation requirements when they entered high school level classes, which is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, nor remove those very few opportunities left to take courses that fulfill their post-secondary or career pathways, and interests.

This bill supplants 2 full credits from the STEM bucket, will deny either a 4<sup>th</sup> year of Math or Science, or the culminating electives in a sequence. The staff does not exist to meet the number of sections that will be needed to fill them, and changes direction from the 2017 enacted graduation requirements back to what was then referred to as a “straitjacket” of courses upon passage.

If you want to change graduation requirements again this session, then:

- any changes should be applied to the class of 2026 and beyond,
- ensure the staff exists in the state to fulfill it,
- districts have the time and resources needed make any changes to the courses required,
- does not supplant other requirements, or alternatively, also changes the other requirements,
- still affords the students of Connecticut to take at least some courses of their interest, be it the Arts, career and vocation classes, or upper level electives in a chosen sequence, and
- meets State Board of Education Standards for the other subject areas, i.e. NGSS.

Superintendents, and educators, are quite busy assessing and addressing the impacts of the pandemic and writing their needs assessment for uses of the Federal funds. This proposal is poor timing without the available staff, courses in place, or decreasing any other requirements, when hands are already full meeting student needs. Most importantly is the impact this abrupt change will have on your 2023's – 2025's, who are already in sequence under the existing requirements and have been through enough.

Graduation requirements are a serious matter with serious consequences deserving of serious contemplation. For those who screened and raised this bill, the annual flavor of the year throw ins without regard for implementation as your operating principle is quite concerning.

Sincerely,

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