

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1033

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY AS PART OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Title: REQUIREMENTS.

Vote Date: 3/29/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/17/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill alters graduation requirements, beginning with the class of 2023 by allowing computer science to count towards the 9-credit requirement for STEM and adding a 1-credit requirement in personal financial management which may count towards the STEM credit requirement as well. Students may meet the financial management requirement using separate high-school courses.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner, State Department of Education:

However well intentioned, the SDE cannot support the modification of the graduation requirements to add additional coursework at this time. Mandating financial literacy and computer science for the class of 2023 as these students enter their junior year places an unnecessary burden on students, districts, and boards of education and is redundant with the existing requirements. It is not necessary to single-out computer science as being part of STEM pathway as it is currently considered a part of the STEM pathway. Additionally, 33 Connecticut districts currently list personal finance as a local BOE graduation requirement.

Shawn T. Wooden, Treasurer, State of Connecticut:

Lack of education in financial management makes young people prone to expensive credit behaviors, such as using payday loans and carrying a balance on high-interest credit cards, culminating in higher credit defaults and delinquencies that follow them for the rest of their lives. These habits are not just bad for young people and families trying to amass wealth and move up the economic ladder, the high default rates and low credit scores are bad for the economy and our local communities. Computer science is already a requirement in affluent, majority white districts, and should be looked at through a racial equity lens.

Steven Hernández, Executive Director, CWCSEO: Educators in computer science and coding have been out of access for many students. Delivering this coursework to more students, of all socio-economic levels in the state will expand new horizons in the workforce for many students. On financial literacy, it is critically important that any developed coursework teach the basic elements of entrepreneurship and wealth building.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sen. Kevin Witkos, Chief Deputy Senate Republican Leader:

A wide range of industries and career fields incorporate computer science to some degree, and it is critical that we ensure our students are introduced to this field at the K-12 level. Financial literacy are critical life skills that impact every person and incorporating this curriculum as a graduation requirement will help prepare them for a successful future.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.:

They support allowing computer science to count for the STEM requirements but are opposed to the addition of financial literacy as another specific graduation requirement. They recognize the importance of financial literacy, but when the new high school graduation requirements were established there was extensive discussion of the coursework balanced with the need to allow student interest to be reflected in their course choices.

Jacqueline Corricelli, Teacher; Shawn Draczynski Tobin, Teacher;

Norman Sondheimer, LAA, Computer Science Teachers Association CT Chapter

Clarifying whether computer science is a STEM subject will simplify achievement of existing legislative and executive intent. Since “science, technology, engineering and mathematics” appears elsewhere in Connecticut education law and in bills under consideration, it should be codified into law that "for purposes of education, STEM includes computer science.

Ashley Gibson, Director, Government Relations, College Board;

Amy Roberts, Director State Government Affairs, Code.org

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. 64% of Black students attend high schools that offer a foundational CS course compared to 83% of white students College Board has introduced the AP Computer Science Principles course to help bring CS coursework to students throughout the state.

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN:

Investments in CS education are necessary to ensure Connecticut kids can compete for tomorrow's jobs in this rapidly growing field. Unfortunately, only 10% of all schools offer computer science courses. Financial literacy is also a vital field of education to pursue, though supporting that field without addressing underlying economic inequality will not ensure that people will be able to gain more economic wealth later in life.

Ray Rossomando, Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations, CEA:

They support the inclusion of financial literacy within existing curricular requirements. This would ensure the topic is covered in a meaningful way without creating a new unmanageable mandate for teachers or school districts.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jennifer Jacobsen: 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. 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? Any change to graduation requirements needs to be rolled up by applying them to whichever class is in 7th grade and below at the time of the proposal, and not put upon those high school students who have already determined their sequences based upon the existing graduation requirements.

Shannon Marimón, Executive Director, ReadyCT:

There is reason to be concerned that this could result in yet another unfunded mandate for our school systems. Additionally, the introduction of new course requirements flies in the face of the flexibilities that were desired in revising the high school graduation requirements in the first place. We should avoid walking back on this aim.

Reported by: Dallas Emerle

Date: 3/30/2021