

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Hillary Risler, Esq., Legislative Analyst
Date: February 24, 2021
Subj: **LD 127, “Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program to Provide Grants for Professional Development in Computer Science Information” (Pouliot)**

SUMMARY

This resolve establishes a 2-year pilot program to provide grants for professional development in computer science instruction.

Funds would be distributed through a grant process. Applications for grants would need to include how the local education agency will:

- Engage new and existing teachers with minimal or no background in computer science instruction in professional development opportunities in computer science instruction;
- Use research-based or evidence-based best practices for high-quality professional development;
- Engage and support historically underrepresented student populations in computer science;
- Provide teachers with hands-on, inquiry-based practices; and
- Engage, involve or partner with outside organizations, including but not limited to the business community, nonprofit organizations, and private entities

The funds may only be used for high-quality, teacher-developed professional development for pre-k to grade 12 computer science pedagogy and content, and any local education agency that receives funds must submit annual reports for the duration of the grant. During the public hearing the sponsor proposed an amendment to this section of the bill that would provide that a majority of funds in grades 9-12 would be used towards professional development for courses that may lead to college credit for a high school student.

The bill would permit the fund to receive funds from State, federal and other sources (such as private citizens, corporations and other entities).

The DOE would report back to the EDU committee no later than January 1, 2023 on the pilot program and any recommendations.

The bill includes an emergency preamble and clause.

TESTIMONY

- **Proponents**

- There is job demand in the computing field, but data shows that only 56% of Maine public high schools teach at least one computer science class
- The biggest barrier to offering more computer science is the lack of funds for preparing teachers – this resolve would help by improving instructional capacity and expanding access to computer science
- This resolve would provide more training and professional development for teachers in computer science and would align with the DOE’s state plan for computer science (available here: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/ltt/computerscience/plan>)
- The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of technology infrastructure
- While there is the potential for inequities with grant-based funding, this program would be an important step toward broader incorporation of computer science literacy skills
- Potential to use grant funds for teachers to dovetail computer science into the existing school day
- Suggestion to encourage funding not only for college credit, but for any alternative credit (such as certifications and badges)
- Some concern about where the funding is coming from and whether it can be sustained

- **Opponents:** None

- **Neither For Nor Against:**

- Concern regarding the inequities of grant-funding and that it’s not clear from the resolve where the money is coming from, if it would be coming from somewhere else in the education budget, or how much would be appropriated

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 129th Legislature, First Regular Session: LD 1382, Resolve, Directing the Department of Education to Study and Develop a State Plan for Computer Science Instruction and Professional Development
- 129th Legislature, Second Regular Session: EDU Committee voted to report out a committee bill establishing a pilot program to provide grants for professional development in computer science instruction
 - The committee vote included providing an appropriation of \$250,000 in each year of the pilot program
 - The committee bill was never reported out of committee and therefore died in committee at the adjournment of the Second Regular Session

COMMITTEE REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- What would the Fiscal Note look like for this?
- Amanda Oechslie, EducateMaine, provided the attached list of businesses and organizations that have pledged their support to the [CS4Maine](#) coalition goals and objectives. She also noted that in general, all of the businesses also support teacher professional development in the area of Computer Science Instruction. And that the Maine State Chamber of Commerce is a founding member of the coalition, and Project>Login was launched with private-sector support. More information about funders and partners can be found on their [website](#).

PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

- Not yet determined

TechNet
Systems Engineering
CGI
Texas Instruments
Perpetuating
BitsBox
Visual Access Technology Incorporated
The Jackson Laboratory
Cashstar
Athenahealth
Defendify
Plimpton Research
The Maine Game
Unlimited Technology
MEMIC
Project Lead the Way
Pluralsight One
Canyon Networks
Maine Technology Users Group (MTUG)
Tyler Technologies
Microsoft
State of Maine IT
Live and Work in Maine
Pro Search
Vault
MEDRhythms
Wonder Workshop
Winexnet
Wex
Bank of America

Code.org
Mainely Tech Women
Center for Curriculum Redesign
Maine Discovery Museum
Maine Science Festival
BootUp
Educate Maine
Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance
Junior Achievement
Maine Computer Science Teachers
Association

Husson University
RSU 29
UNE
Thomas College
University of Maine System
Casco Bay High School
Cyber Panthers
Lewiston Public Schools

D.A. Hurd Library
Vassalboro Public Library
Springvale Public Library
Fort Fairfield Public Library
Auburn Public Library
Merrill Memorial Library
Scarborough Public Library
Kennebunk Free Library
Camden Public Library
Witherle Memorial Library

Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce
Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce
Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce
Old Orchard Beach Chamber of Commerce