EDUCATE MAINE

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Angela Oechslie, Project>Login Program Director,
Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 127 "Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program To Provide Grants for Professional Development in
Computer Science Instruction"

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Education and
Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Angela Oechslie and I am the Project>Login Program Director
at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 127. Educate Maine's mission is to ensure
that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their
highest educational potential. Our Project>Login program strives to connect students and adult learners
with an interest in computer science or technology to education, training, and employment
opportunities. We recognize the importance of computer science instruction in deeply engaging students
at every stage of the education pipeline, teaching them highly sought-after 21st century skills, and
opening doors to exciting, in-demand careers. Every student in Maine deserves these opportunities.

Further, computer science instruction represents great potential for supporting economic growth in our
state. There are more than 830 open computing jobs in Maine, far exceeding the demand rate for most
other professions. The average salary is $81,965. The existing open jobs alone represent a $68,276,845
opportunity in terms of annual salaries for Maine people.

We will not achieve full opportunity for our students in this field nor our future economy without a
robust educator workforce with access to high-quality professional development opportunities.

Why we need CS Education for Workforce Preparation
Expanding computer science to all Maine students starts with first preparing teachers to teach computer
science. We need to be preparing students in computer science (CS) now for jobs of the future - jobs
that may not even exist yet! Students who develop foundational CS skills will solve complex and
challenging problems and make a positive difference in the world, not to mention have lucrative careers.
Teachers need equitable CS professional development opportunities and funding for them in order to
effectively reach our students.

According to a representative survey from Google/Gallup, school administrators in Maine support
expanding computer science education opportunities: 73% of principals surveyed think CS is just as or
more important than required core classes. Their biggest barrier to offering computer science is the lack
of funds for preparing teachers.

Educate Maine and Project>Login are in support of LD 127
We support a grants program for educators to be able to access and participate in quality computer science professional development. The pandemic has shown us that technology is essential infrastructure in the modern world. Maine students deserve access to courses taught by skilled educators on how they can play a role in helping to develop that infrastructure. Now is the time for public and private investment into professional development and the resources educators need to access high-quality computer science professional learning.

Respectfully,

Angela S. Oechslie
Educate Maine