

**Microsoft Testimony in Support of LD 127, *Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program to Provide Grants for Professional Development in Computer Science Instruction***

**February 17, 2021**

Good afternoon, Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Alexander Price, and I am a Government Relations Specialist at Pierce Atwood LLP. I am speaking to you today on behalf of Microsoft, who we have represented in Maine for the past 7 years, to speak in favor of LD 127, *Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program to Provide Grants for Professional Development in Computer Science Instruction*.

For the past few years, we have been involved in advancing computer science education in Maine. In 2018, we helped found a coalition called Computer Science for Maine (CS4Maine), whose mission is to get computer science taught in every Maine K-12 classroom by 2025. The other founding organizations, who should be commended for their role in advancing computer science education in Maine, include Educate Maine, the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance, Code.org, and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce.

Two years ago, Microsoft launched a pilot program in Maine, which matched teachers who are learning to teach computer science with volunteers from area businesses who have expertise in computer science. The volunteers help the teachers gain knowledge and skills to develop their ability to deliver quality computer science education. The program, known as Technology Education and Literacy in Schools (TEALS), has been very successful in growing the population of teachers who are competently teaching computer science in states across the country.

However, despite this progress, the majority of Maine students still did not have equitable access to computer science courses. As a result, LD 1382 was enacted during the First Regular Session of the 129<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature. LD 1382 directed the Department of Education to study and develop a state plan for computer science instruction and professional development. The bill also directed the Department to share a report to this committee with an overview of how computer science courses and curricula are being implemented; a plan for instruction to include how computer science may be applied toward graduation requirements; a professional development plan for educators; and an estimate of the funding levels necessary to implement the recommendations. The Department completed the report and presented it to this committee on January 2, 2020.

Professional development is required to help teachers become computer science teachers because computer science pre-service teacher pathways are not currently offered in Maine. The teachers who have engaged in this professional development are to be commended for their enthusiasm and courage to take on a completely new content area while in-service, to deliver this education to their students.

LD 127 establishes a 2-year pilot program to provide state grants for professional development in computer science instruction, which will advance recommendations delivered in the Department's report presented to this committee last year. This bill is a critically important step in providing Maine teachers the skills they need to teach computer science in the classroom, and to continue the State's progress of ensuring that all Maine students have access to opportunities to learn computer science skills and concepts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.