CODE Support for HB 5517

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for working to create opportunities for Rhode Island's students. Code.org **supports HB 5517**, which, coupled with funding for CS4RI and careful attention to issues of equity, will help Rhode Island remain a leader in K-12 computer science education.

Computing is now a fundamental part of daily life, commerce, and just about every occupation in today's economy.
- There are over 1,500 current open computing jobs in Rhode Island, with an average salary of $86,000 (Conference Board, January 2021).
- Increasingly, all jobs — not just computing jobs — are digital jobs (Brookings, 2017), including marketing and design jobs. Knowledge of computer science is an advantage in the broadest imaginable range of careers.

Rhode Island has one of the most comprehensive state strategies in bringing computer science to every school.
- CS4RI, launched in 2016, ensures that every high school in the state teaches computer science by building educator capacity through professional development.
- Before 2016, AP Computer Science was only offered in 9 public high schools and no Title I schools; only 1% of RI high school students were enrolled in CS courses; only 72 students took the AP Computer Science exam; and fewer than 350 students graduated from a RI college or university with a bachelor's degree in CS.
- Last year, AP Computer Science was offered in 45 RI schools; 737 exams were taken in AP CS by RI high school students.

But *most* Rhode Island students don't learn this foundational skill.
- Last year, 31% of students who took an AP Computer Science exam were female; 8% were Hispanic or Latino; and 4% were Black or African American.
- Although opportunities are expanding, we need a **coordinated effort statewide** to address disparities in order to create opportunities for all RI students and prepare teachers in each school.

Offering the opportunity to learn computer science is absolutely critical for preparing our students to be college and career ready in the 21st century — not just for coding or computing occupations, but for every career. We need to support these opportunities for Rhode Island's students to thrive in their home state by providing every student with the opportunity to take computer science. Capacity building from CS4RI can ensure that the goal can be met through teachers in the classroom and will lay a foundation for sustainable K-12 computer science education in RI.

We support HB 5517 to expand computer science education to every student in the state. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

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Cameron Wilson, President, Code.org Advocacy Coalition