EDUCATE MAINE

The Joint Standing Committee On Education And Cultural Affairs

Testimony from Jason Judd, Project>Login Program Director, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 398: "An Act to Recognize Computer Science in the Path to Proficiency"

Monday, February 27, 2017

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Jason Judd, 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. 398.

As Program Director of Project>Login, a program to increase the number of Maine professionals in computing and information technology positions, I work closely with many of Maine's employers to recruit qualified workers with strong computer science skills. I constantly hear the challenges facing employers to find workers for computer science and information technology (IT) jobs. Seven CEOs of Maine's largest employers and the University of Maine System recognized this trend a few years ago and established Project>Login to help address this workforce challenge. Despite the success of Project>Login over the last three years in an effort to double the number of computer science and IT degrees granted by Maine's colleges, much more work must be done to keep these tech jobs in Maine.

According to Code.org, there are urgent statistics we need to pay attention to:
- There are currently 1104 open computing jobs in Maine (2.5 times the average demand rate in Maine).
- Computing occupations are the number 1 source of new wages in the United States.
- 71% of new STEM jobs are in computing.
- 8% of STEM graduates are in Computer Science.
- Students who learn computer science in high school are six times more likely to major in it in college. Women are ten times more likely.

This bill seeks to bring together a variety of stakeholders to determine how best to implement computer science in K-12 schools in Maine. This thoughtful approach is important because all Maine students need access to quality computer science instruction to be prepared for the jobs of the future.

Maine has already been recognized for the public-private partnership in technology. In August of 2015, Maine was recognized by the White House as a TechHire state in recognition of the industry and education collaboration to address the technology talent pipeline. In January, Educate Maine and Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance announced the Code.org Regional Partnership, which provides needed financial support for Maine teachers to access quality computer science professional development. This program will train and support up to 40 middle and high school teachers in computer science each year. Our organizations are committed to expanding computer science in many of Maine's most rural and underserved schools.

This bill extends the quality work already happening in Maine and ensures a collaborative approach to increasing student access to computer science. Educate Maine supports this bill as an important first step to provide access to computer science for Maine students.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Jason Judd
Project>Login Program Director
Educate Maine