

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Rachelle Tome, Chief Academic Officer of the Department of Education

In Opposition of: L.D. 398

An Act To Recognize Computer Science in the Path to Proficiency

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Representative Stearns

Cosponsored by: Representatives Farnsworth, Kornfield, Lyford, Pierce and Pouliot

Date: February 27, 2017

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Rachelle Tome, and I am here today representing the Department speaking in opposition of: L.D. 398, An Act To Recognize Computer Science in the Path to Proficiency.

This bill proposes to add requirements to current proficiency-based legislation in order to ensure that computer science coursework would be recognized as part of a student's path to proficiency.

Computer science, as referenced by this bill, is a component of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The Department recognizes the value of STEM and believes that knowledge in STEM plays a key role in developing informed citizens and supporting preparation for a 21st century career environment. To that end, the Department has provided support for Maine's Science and Technology learning standards through professional development and resources.

MRSA, Title 20-A, §4722-A currently allows students to gain proficiency through multiple pathways, and by presenting multiple types of evidence to certify proficiency. As a result, experiences related to computer sciences that align with Maine's learning results, including the Guiding Principles, are already allowable. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Council, charged with advancing STEM education in grades K – 12, could play a key role in advancing these intersections by exploring and identifying areas within Maine's system of Learning Results that are best suited for integration and exposure to computer science.

The Department agrees that Maine students should be exposed to computer science and should have opportunities to explore whether they would be interested in learning more about computer science, and believes this may be accomplished effectively by providing exposure to various

aspects of computer sciences throughout the Prek-12 experience. In addition to opportunities that take place during the school day, other avenues, such as 21st Century After School Programs or other external activities, should be considered as an option for allowing students to explore and develop interests and capabilities related to computer science.

In conclusion, the Department of Education is opposed to L.D. 398 An Act To Recognize Computer Science in the Path to Proficiency. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and I will be available for work sessions on this bill.