

EDUCATION (EDU)

Resolution EDU-22-34

PROVIDING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO COMPUTER SCIENCE PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) has historically promoted increasing participation and representation of African Americans in technology, engineering, and other technical professions;

WHEREAS, students' access to a foundational computer science education is an issue of both equity and economic opportunity;

WHEREAS, computing occupations are among the highest wage and highest demand occupations;

WHEREAS, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, STEM occupations are projected to grow over two times faster than all other occupations over the next decade and computer occupations are projected to grow three times faster, resulting in more than half a million new computer jobs;

WHEREAS, the percentage of Black employees at major technology companies is consistently in the low single digits and Black workers account for 7 percent of workers in computer occupations and 9 percent of computer science majors were black in 2019;

WHEREAS, while funding to Black entrepreneurs quadrupled from 2020 to 2021, Black startup founders received only 1.2 percent of the venture capital invested in U.S. startups in the first half of 2021 according to Forbes;

WHEREAS, learning computer science is not just for students who want to be programmers or engineers; studying computer science helps build critical thinking skills, computational thinking and problem solving, so that regardless of what college or career path a student chooses, they have developed lifelong skills to help them in academic and work life;

WHEREAS, in 2022, we want our students to be not merely consumers of technology, but creators of it;

WHEREAS, the number of Black students taking an AP computer science exam has increased every year since 2014, from 1,469 in 2014 to 9,080 in 2020;

WHEREAS, Black students are still less likely to attend a school that offers a computer science course and are less likely to enroll in a class even when it is available to them;

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WHEREAS, only 48 percent of public high schools offer at least one computer science class, Black/African-American students are 1.2 times less likely than their white and Asian peers to attend a school that offers AP Computer science and 2.8 times less likely to take an AP CS exam when they attend a school that offers it; and

WHEREAS, NBCSL legislators have championed or supported legislation to create more equitable access to computer science education for historically underrepresented students in several states.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NBCSL calls on state governments to adopt policies requiring every public high school offer at least one foundational computer science course and provide the resources and incentives to expand beyond one class;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL calls on federal, state, and local governments to fund computer science professional learning programs for teachers in grades K-12 and recommends providing incentives to teachers serving in schools with higher-than-average rates of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals, as well as schools serving higher than average populations of students who have been historically excluded from computing fields; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Senator Raumesh Akbari (TN)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Education (EDU) Policy Committee

Ratified in Plenary Session: December 2, 2021

Ratification certified by: Representative Billy Mitchell (GA), NBCSL President