

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1398
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gavin Kratcha. I am a Junior at Hankinson High School. I am here today to speak in favor of House Bill 1398 regarding Computer Science education.

With the pandemic, many of our students felt more isolated than ever. The pandemic left us with one of the most difficult times in Education in our nation's history. There is a lack of motivation. Students have less of a connection with our schools. Students feel more distanced from each other than they ever had. But with these hardships came a gift. This gift was the gift of technology. More people have access to technology and the internet at their fingertips than ever before. We used this gift in our schools to have lectures and assignments online, something that was new to all of us. Students use this technology every day, but they have never been taught how to use this technology to its fullest potential. Students and teachers dove into the world of technology so fast that, in many instances, they haven't been taught proper digital citizenship and cybersecurity.

This is a huge problem in our education system. Students must know how to use this technology properly to be able to use the technology to its fullest potential. This bill will help solve this problem. By requiring students to have one unit of computer science or cybersecurity, students will gain basic knowledge of how to use a computer properly with consideration to good cybersecurity. This will prepare them for their future lives, where technology will be used every day.

Technology also brings opportunities and programs to our students, who may not have these opportunities otherwise. I mentioned students' lack of engagement earlier. I believe that integrating computer science in all school districts could help this. I had the amazing opportunity to assist the technology coordinator in planning an Hour of Code program at our school. I worked closely with him to organize the event, and I had the chance to work with students of all ages to expose them to the great subject of computer science. I saw something quite profound that day. I saw students walk in with the same look we've all seen far too often. The look that shows a lack of engagement and motivation. The excitement just wasn't there. We started to show them all the different things there were to do. We showed them how to code a robot to make art. We made an obstacle course for a robot to navigate with the students' code. We had many different stations with all kinds of technology. We then got the students to try something, it didn't matter what the outcome was or how it worked, we just

wanted them to try. At the beginning, it was difficult to get the excitement, something we see a lot in education. But then the students started using the technology. We saw students that were deprived of excitement turn energetic. They had excitement, they had drive, they had motivation. They started to naturally work together and think creatively of how to solve the problem. It wasn't long before every student in that room was gleaming with excitement. With every new group, we heard the same thing from the teachers: they have never seen their students this excited, this engaged, and this motivated all year. By the end, they couldn't get their students to leave, they were too engaged and they wanted to try everything there. Every hour we saw the same process. Students entered, unmotivated and undriven. By the end, you couldn't get them away from the technology.

All it took was one hour. One hour of exposure to computer science for their mindset to flip. They were excited, driven, and happy. Now imagine if they had one hour of this every day for a year. Students would learn more about computers and computer science than ever before. There would be excitement and drive that we need so desperately. I believe that this bill has the potential to not only improve computer literacy and cybersecurity, but also give us more student engagement and a newfound source of opportunity for our students.

The purpose of our education is to prepare us for our future lives. Whether that is entering the job force, going to college, starting your own business, or

anything else, technology will be used in all aspects of our live. It would be an injustice to us, the students, to not teach us how to use this technology that we have at our disposal. We must teach students cybersecurity in order to stay safe in this increasingly digital world. We must also teach computer literacy so students know how to navigate this digital world. Teaching students basic computer science will give them a competitive edge and allow them to explore opportunities they previously didn't know existed. This is why I firmly believe that in order to say that we are preparing students for their future lives, we must educate all our students in computer science and cybersecurity.

This bill has the opportunity to give our students something amazing. This bill would give students the proper education in technology so that we can succeed in our future lives. This bill would help our students become more involved with school and give our students a way to engage with the technology we have. If we want us, the students, to be the most prepared and well-rounded students we can be, we must provide computer science education to every student.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, that concludes my prepared testimony. I will stand for any questions that you may have.