



March 15, 2023

Re: Computer Science as a High School Graduation Requirement

Hello, Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Jordan Zakery, and I serve as Regional Advocacy Director at ExcelinEd, a national nonpartisan education policy solutions tank founded by Governor Jeb Bush. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the benefits and current landscape of K-12 computer science as a course offering and/or graduation requirement in states across the nation.

Nationwide, five states are currently leading the charge in requiring computer science as a high school graduation requirement: South Carolina, Nevada, Arkansas, Nebraska and Tennessee. Altogether, 27 states have adopted policies that ensure high school students have access to computer science courses.

North Dakota currently allows two computer science courses—AP Computer Science A or Mathematics for Computer Science/Information Technology—to count as a mathematics credit toward graduation. The legislation you are now considering would make computer science a graduation requirement by allowing students to receive credit in mathematics or science, or both, by completing approved computer science courses.

To be prepared for success in the 21st century workplace and a technology economy, today's students need access to coursework that builds relevant, in-demand skills and credentials. Such skills can also lead to higher-quality, higher-wage jobs. According to the Brookings Institution's [Hamilton Project](#), a college graduate with a computer science major can earn 40 percent more than the college average. Currently, computing occupations are the number one source of new wages in America—that's 16 percent of all new wages.

In North Dakota alone, the **Technology Council of North Dakota** has identified more than 4,100 businesses within the tech subsectors that employ more than 21,000 North Dakotans in various fields. Over the last ten years, the contribution of the



technology subsectors to North Dakota's GDP almost doubled, growing by 39 percent.

Support among educators and parents for computer science access is also high. [Gallup](#) reports that 90 percent of parents want their children to learn computer science, while only 53 percent of schools nationwide offer computer science. According to [data from code.org](#), 83 percent of parents and 64 percent of students in rural and small towns believe offering computer science is more or equally important as any required course.

Establishing policy that requires computer science as a graduation requirement is a visionary investment. It benefits not only today's students but also grows a state's workforce and economy and helps build the state's long-term success. Thank you for graciously allowing us to contribute testimony.

Respectfully,
Jordan Zakery