**KASB** KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
Serving Educational Leaders. Inspiring Student Success

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Testimony before the

House Committee on Education

On

<u>HB 2466</u> - enacting the promoting advancement in computing knowledge act; requiring computer science courses of instruction in high schools; making and concerning appropriations for the state board of regents and the state department of education for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

by

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January 25, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2466. KASB appears as neutral because we support many of its provisions; we would like to see clarifying amendments to some provisions and oppose one section of the bill. We understand the chair will be proposing some changes in the bill, and we hope the committee will adopt changes in the bill to allow our support.

KASB's position on any bill is determined by the positions adopted by our member school boards. In December, our members specifically adopted the following statement:

*KASB supports the Kansas State Board of Education's Kansans Can vision and outcomes, with the goal of leading the world in the success of each student.*

Those outcomes include academic preparation for postsecondary education and employment and increasing postsecondary success.

We also support the "Rose Capacities" adopted by the Kansas Supreme Court and the Kansas Legislature, which are consistent with the Kansans Can outcomes and which includes the goals of:

*Training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently; and*

*Academic or vocational skills to compete favorably with public school students' counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.*

The stated purpose of this bill is to increase the number of students with computer science skills by increasing access to those programs through more qualified teachers and more courses offered. It seems clear that computer science skills are and will be critical to help students "choose and pursue life work intelligently" and to "prepare for advanced training" in those fields.

Data in the "State of Computer Science Education" report by Code.org indicate that Kansas may be lagging behind other states in access to computer science education, which could make it more difficult

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for Kansas students to "compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states in academic or the job market." The report also indicates that all states have differences among student groups by race, gender, wealth and location that impact equal opportunity for success.

**Funding**

Sections 1, 2 and 6 of the bill provide funding to support expanded teacher training programs to increase the supply of qualified teachers for computer science courses. This would support faster expansion of these programs and is consistent with the Legislature's constitutional duty to "provide suitable finance for the educational interests of the state."

In awarding funds, the bill directs the State Board of Education to prioritize: (1) School districts that work in partnership with providers of high quality professional learning; (2) proposals that describe strategies to enroll female students, students from marginalized racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in computer science, students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, students with disabilities and English language learners; and (3) proposals from rural or urban areas that experience difficulties providing computer science offerings. These priorities would help target resources to high need areas.

We strongly support these sections of the bill.

**Course Offering**

Section 5 of the bill requires that, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each high school operated by a school district shall offer at least one computer science course that must be high quality, meet or exceed the Kansas model standards for computer science established by the State Board of Education; and be available in a traditional classroom setting, blended learning environment, online-based or other technology-based format that is tailored to meet the needs of each high school and each participating student.

We have several concerns about this section which we believe need to be addressed to support the bill.

First, there needs to be a clear definition of what courses would meet the requirements of this section. We understand KSDE could interpret these requirements to be much stricter than the definition used by Code.org in its national report. It is also not clear whether the requirement applies to a single semester course or a full year. These definitions will help determine teacher availability and student interest in such programs.

Second, because of the difficulty in finding an adequate number of teachers for such courses, we believe the bill should specifically authorize that such courses can be delivered on an on-line basis through consortia of districts or other service providers, with no loss of funding.

Third, we believe districts should be given the option of providing instruction on the competencies of computer science in methods other than traditional time-based Carnegie units, such as interdisciplinary programs, internships and other "real world experiences." The principles of school redesign stress the need for greater flexibility and individualization in learning, family and business partnerships, and a greater emphasis on real world application. These principles were strongly endorsed by 5,000 Kansans in this year's KSDE Kansans Can success tour.

One way to address some of these issues would be to leave maximum flexibility in the bill and charge the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive state plan for computer science education –

one of the recommendations of the national report. Such a plan could be developed by input from each part of government responsible for education: the State Board's "general supervision" of public schools; the Legislature's role in establishing a system of public education and providing suitable funding; and local school boards to "maintain, develop and operate" public schools – along with, of course, the educators who actually provide the instruction.

**Graduation Requirement**

Section 5 also requires that beginning with the entering ninth grade class in 2025-2026, students attending a high school operated by a school district must earn one unit of credit in an approved high school computer science course for graduation, with exceptions for students who have an individualized education program or a section 504 plan. However, the graduation requirement provisions shall expire on July 1, 2025, "so that the legislature may review the progress made pursuant to the promoting advancement in computing knowledge act prior to the implementation of this subsection."

Despite this "sunset" provision, KASB opposes this provision for these reasons.

First, our members have specifically adopted a position supporting:

*General supervision of public schools under the State Board of Education, including setting standards for accreditation, learning standards, graduation and licensure.*

Second, the State Board is currently conducting a study of state graduation requirements, which our Delegate Assembly has also endorsed:

*Support efforts of the State Board to consider revising high school graduation requirements to better reflect student preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce, including more "real world" experience.*

Third, even if the State Board's study were to recommend a computer science requirement, we would have concerns. One of the Kansans Can outcomes is an Individualized Plan of Study for each student to:

*Provide adequate support to allow more personalized educational experiences for each student.*

Fourth, we note that the 'State of Computer Science" recommendations do NOT include making computer science a graduation requirement for all students.

We urge the committee to remove the section on graduation requirements and address concerns about course offerings to allow our support of the bill. However, we want to add a caveat that the goals of the bill will be competing with other goals, such recovering from learning loss during COVID, improving reading success by third grade, expanding mental health service to students, and strengthening work-based learning opportunities, and personal and interpersonal skills to better prepare students for the workforce, and strengthening civic education – and probably more before this session adjourns. They are undertaken at a time when districts have increased funding from the *Gannon* school finance plan, but face rising costs and severe staff shortages, similar to what families, businesses and other organizations are facing. These issues must be considered for planning to implement the goals of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Bill Description**

Section 1. For Fiscal Year 2023 (next school year), appropriates $1 million to the Kansas State Department of Education to provide grants to high-quality professional learning providers pursuant to the provisions of section 6.

Section 2. For FY 2023, appropriates $1 million to the Kansas State Board of Regents for computer science preservice educator grants, which may be used to provide scholarships to preservice teachers who are working towards a degree in elementary or secondary education who complete one course in computer science while enrolled in a state educational institution or community college.

Such scholarships shall exceed $1,000 and shall prioritize recruitment of candidates from underrepresented groups and candidates who agree to teach computer science in rural schools and schools with higher percentages of students from underrepresented groups. These funds may also be spent to support eligible preservice education programs in the state with the development and implementation of pathways in computer science education to help preservice teachers to add a certification to teach computer science education within their intended major and area of certification.

Section 3 names this act the promoting advancement in computing knowledge act and section 4 provides definitions.

Section 5. Requires beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each high school operated by a school district shall offer at least one computer science course that must be high quality, meet or exceed the Kansas model standards for computer science established by the state board of education; and be available in a traditional classroom setting, blended learning environment, online-based or other technology-based format that is tailored to meet the needs of each high school and each participating student.

It further requires that beginning with the entering ninth grade class in 2025-2026, students attending a high school operated by a school district must earn one unit of credit in an approved high school computer science course for graduation, with exceptions for students who have an individualized education program or a section 504 plan. The graduation requirement provisions shall expire on July 1, 2025, "so that the legislature may review the progress made pursuant to the promoting advancement in computing knowledge act prior to the implementation of this subsection."

Section 6. Provides how the state board of education may award grants to high-quality professional learning providers to develop and implement teacher professional development programs for the computer science courses required to be taught pursuant to section 5.

"High-quality professional learning providers" means any school district, school district interlocal cooperative, school district cooperative, institution of higher education, nonprofit organization or private entity that has successfully designed, implemented and scaled high-quality professional learning for teachers; and is approved or recommended by the state board of education as providing high-quality professional learning.

In award such grants, the state boards should prioritize: (1) School districts that work in partnership with providers of high quality professional learning; (2) proposals that describe strategies to enroll female students, students from marginalized racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in computer science, students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, students with disabilities and English language learners; and (3) proposals from rural or urban areas that experience difficulties providing computer science offerings.

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