



April 28, 2016

Representative Joel Johnson
Chair, House Workforce and Talent Development Committee
S-1286 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Re Support for HB 5463

Dear Chairman Johnson,

On behalf of TechNet, a state and federal policy trade association made up of more than 70 of the nation's leading technology and innovation companies, I write to you in support of HB 5463, sponsored by Representative Lisa Lyons, which would allow a high school foreign language requirement to be fulfilled by the completion of a computer-coding course. TechNet respectfully asks that your Committee report it favorably as doing so would make a significant statement that the Legislature is serious about providing Michigan students the opportunity to learn coding, a skill more valuable and necessary than ever to qualify for jobs in the technology and innovation sector that is driving our nation's new economy.

TechNet member companies strongly support legislation that provides incentives for expanded STEM, computer science and coding education. They prepare students to be problem solvers and innovators and teach computational thinking—logical data analysis and organization, the ability to create concise problem statements, the skills to identify and implement algorithm-based solutions, and to generalize and extrapolate solutions that can be applied to other problems. Helping students develop these skills will be a benefit to them in every subject, in the classroom and beyond.

The technology and innovation sector that is driving today's job market needs a workforce trained in coding and computer science to sustain it. Nearly every industry today is driven by applied computer science. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that, by 2018, computing occupations will grow by 21% - that's twice the national average. Right now, there are more than 150,000 job openings that require computing, with more than 14,000 in Michigan. These jobs pay 75 percent more than the national median annual salary. The average salary for a computing occupation in MI is \$75,913, which is significantly higher than the average salary in the state (\$45,140).

Regretfully, Michigan is not properly preparing their students for the technology and innovation economy workforce. Michigan had only **1,612 computer science graduates** in 2014; only **15%** were female. Only **936 high school students** in Michigan took the AP Computer Science exam in 2015; only **15%** were female; only **20** were Hispanic; only **16** were black. Only **103 schools** in MI (**16%** of MI schools with AP programs) offered the AP Computer Science course in 2014-2015. There are fewer AP exams taken in computer science than in any other STEM subject area.

If passed, HB 5463 will send a strong signal that policy makers and the technology sector are working together to provide students with the expanded opportunities they need to learn coding and computer science and offer them a path to future jobs in the innovation economy.

For the above reasons, we again ask that HB 5463 be carefully considered and passed favorably out of Committee so that it may pass in to law this session. If you, your staff or the Committee has any questions or concerns, please consider TechNet a resource.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Mincieli". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matt Mincieli
Executive Director, Northeast Region
TechNet
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Cc: Melissa Weipert, Committee Clerk