



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 22, 2015

Testimony in Favor of HB2766
Coding to meet the World Language Requirement

Since being elected to the Legislature, this body has been highly engaged in the conversation about how we help schools restore Career Technical Education (CTE) to Oregon's public schools, recognizing that not every student is on a path that will lead them to a traditional four-year degree. In fact, as part of our aspirational goals of 40-40-20, CTE plays a large role in achieving those benchmarks.

Much of the CTE discussion has been focused on restoring mechanical arts like electrical work, auto shop, wood and metal shop, and other hands-on skill programs. In those conversations, challenges like the physical infrastructure of old buildings or transportation to regional programs has driven the debates around the cost of restoring CTE to Oregon schools.

While CTE certainly encompasses modernized versions of traditional CTE coursework, CTE also includes new technologies that are driving the workforce and our economy. According to Code Oregon, there are currently 700 open jobs that require coding skills. The average salary ranges between \$45,000 and \$70,000 per year. By 2020, Code Oregon estimates that there will be 10,000 positions that need to be filled creating an opportunity for Oregon students to move directly from high school into a family wage job. This generation of high school students represents the generation of Digital Natives. My own children have never known a time in their life where they have not had access to high speed internet connections, portable devices, and access to a vast world library of content across the web.

Through HB2766, Oregon has the chance to modernize our CTE offerings. HB2766 would allow that Coding could meet the world language requirement for graduation, and the admissions requirement for our Oregon institutes of higher education. Currently, Oregon's graduation requirement includes three credit hours for either a world language, art, or CTE. The natural inclination would be to land coding under the CTE offerings. But Coding is unique in that it not only meets the traditional definition of a language – it has symbols, syntax, semantics, and is used for communicators to send and receive messages – but it is truly the only language used around the globe. Coders in Pakistan, China, Brazil, Texas, South Africa and Oregon all use the same underlying language to power the communications we receive across the web, our computers, and our smartphones.

HB2766 is easily implemented. Organizations like Code.org have curriculum at the ready. Local companies like Tree House can deliver coding classes into our classrooms, facilitated by a district teacher, for nine dollars per student per month. So for the equivalent cost of the average textbook, we graduate students who have an immediate workforce skill. When I was in college, a part time job working through school consisted of waiting tables. With coding skills earned in high school, a student can work part time during college as they further their skills or find another path.

Further, many non-coding jobs are increasingly giving preference to candidates with basic coding skills, particularly jobs that would require things like managing content for a company website, newsletter or blog.

HB2766 isn't an either/or bill. For many students, the option of Coding to meet the world language requirement opens up new possibilities. The bill requires Oregon Universities to allow Coding to meet the admissions requirement, but doesn't not replace foreign language requirements towards meeting degree requirements at the university. But what

HB2766 does do that a traditional foreign language cannot do is it provides a CTE that is in high demand and a universal language that will carry a student to a job in any country in the world.

HB2766 isn't inventing a wheel. Texas and Oklahoma have already made this choice for their students. Other states that compete with Oregon for tech business like Louisiana and South Carolina are rapidly expanding their code programs in not just high schools, but in middle school as well. Kentucky is on its way to making this a law this year. Oregon, with its Silicon Forest, is not competitive in getting our kids these skills and very few schools have put forward Coding as a CTE offering.

There is a significant amount of technical expertise that we can draw from to implement HB2766. More importantly, unlike other traditional CTE offerings like welding or mechanics, if a school so chooses, the digital curriculum allows for self-directed summer learning.

As a four-year veteran of the House Education Committee, I urge the committee to support HB2766. This is one of the most meaningful and affordable CTE opportunities we can give to our kids. We talk a lot about family wage jobs in this building. And we know how expensive, yet successful, traditional CTE is for our kids. For just a few dollars per student, we can give Oregon kids an opportunity at a real family wage job, with unlimited potential for flexibility, future earnings and the ability to be competitive in the global marketplace.