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Code.org is a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to computer science in K–12—especially for female students and underrepresented minority students. We are proud to support Representative Hernandez's bill (HB 4098), which would give every Oregon student the opportunity to succeed.

Computing is a foundational skill for K–12 students. It develops students' computational and critical thinking skills and teaches them how to create—not just use—new technologies. Computer science is driving job growth and innovation in Oregon and throughout the U.S., and this decade, computing occupations have become the single largest sector of new wages in the U.S. with more than 500,000 currently open jobs. These opportunities go far beyond just the tech companies that call Oregon home; 67% of computing jobs are in agriculture, retail, banking, transportation, entertainment, manufacturing, and government. There are currently more than 4,800 unfilled computing jobs in Oregon alone.

But without a foundational knowledge in computer science, Oregon students are getting left behind. There were only 800 computer science graduates last year, and just 19% of those graduates are female. Nationally, just 45% of high schools nationally teach computer science, and in Oregon, that number drops to only 35% of high schools.

Within Oregon high schools, just 788 exams were taken in AP Computer Science last year, less than in any other STEM field. Students attending urban and rural schools are significantly less likely to attend schools that offer computer science classes creating a constant cycle of underrepresentation in computing fields.

Whether a student aspires to be a software engineer, or if she just wants a well-rounded education in today's changing world, access to computer science in school is an economic imperative for Oregon to remain competitive. Code.org strongly supports the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan to make computer science a fundamental part of Oregon's K–12 education system and ensure all students have access to computer science, no matter who they are or where they live.

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