

HCS SS SCS SBs 894 & 921 -- STEM EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Libla

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 8 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative Oversight Committee by a vote of 8 to 3.

This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a "STEM Career Awareness Program" for middle school students.

The bill also requires the department to develop a high school graduation policy that will allow a student to substitute a computer science course for any math, science, or practical arts unit required for high school graduation. The department will convene a work group including representatives from elementary and secondary education, institutions of higher education, business, and industry. This work group will develop rigorous academic performance standards for the computer science courses.

The bill also requires the department to develop a procedure for teachers to receive an endorsement on their teaching license if they demonstrate sufficient knowledge of computer science.

The bill creates the "Stem Career Awareness Program Fund" and the "Computer Science Education Fund." Subject to appropriation, the State Board of Education shall award grants for providing teacher professional development programs relating to computer science.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is a large and increasing workforce need for students proficient in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and computer science. Many of the available jobs provide good opportunity and income to students, including students with proficiency in computer science who do not wish to go to college. This bill will increase teacher proficiency, course availability, and student awareness of STEM and computer science.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Libla; Code.Org; Toby Rush; Ryan Weber, Kansas City Technical Council; Missouri Education Reform Council; Align Ed; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Gifted Association of Missouri; The Boeing Company; Missouri Administrators Coalition; Missouri State Teachers Association; Launchcode; Missouri National Education Association; BIO-STL; and Microsoft.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that most colleges

require four years of math, and computer science courses do not qualify. Students taking advantage of this bill may find themselves disadvantaged in college applications. Further, while they agree that computer science education is important, so are the math and science courses required for graduation and college admissions.

Testifying against the bill was the Missouri School Counselor Association.