

HCS HB 320 -- COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSE

SPONSOR: Fitzwater

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 19 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 11 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 320.

This bill modifies the definition of "computer science course" to include both a stand-alone computer course in the elementary, middle, and high school levels or any course that embeds computer science content within other subjects.

The bill will require public schools and charter schools in all school years after July 1, 2022 to offer at least one computer science course in high school, instruction in exploratory computer science in middle school, and the basics of computer science and computational thinking in elementary schools.

Districts and charter schools will annually submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) a report of computer science courses offered in each school in the district, the number and percentage of students enrolled, and the number of computer science instructors, along with demographics and additional information specified in the bill.

The bill requires DESE to appoint a computer science supervisor to be responsible for the posting of information to the Department's website.

Beginning in school years after July 1, 2022 public institutions of higher education will allow a computer science course counted toward a science or practical art state graduation credit to satisfy as an equivalent admission requirement.

The bill establishes the "Computer Science Education Task Force". The membership of the Task Force includes two members of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the Speaker of the House and one by the Minority Leader, two members of the Senate with one appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate and one appointed by the Minority Leader, the Governor or his designee, the Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of Higher Education or their designees and six members as appointed by the Commissioner of Education representing various interested parties as specified.

The mission of the Task Force is to develop a state strategic plan for expansion of computer science education programs statewide and the details of the components of that plan are outlined in the bill. The Task Force will hold its first meeting within one month of the effective date of the bill and submit a report outlining activities and recommendations for legislation to the General Assembly before June 30, 2022. The Task Force will dissolve June 30, 2023.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill will help Missouri students develop critical skills needed in a very high need area of study. This bill will benefit job growth as employer's often look for basic computer science educational experience. Several other states within the region are beginning to offer similar course accommodations like those in this bill.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Fitzwater; Kansas City Tech Council; Amazon Services; Greater St. Louis Incorporated; Code.Org; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Excellence In Education.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill and the efforts put forth to develop this idea are greatly appreciated and that most schools do offer something similar the majority will not substitute computer courses for mathematics at anything beyond a very basic level.

Testifying against the bill were Beth Kania-Gosche, Missouri University of Science and Technology; Dixie Williams, University of Missouri - St. Louis; Jim Spain, University of Missouri - Columbia; Associated Students of The University of Missouri; and the University of Missouri System.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.