



February 5th, 2023

Dear Legislators,

My name is Kernard Jones, and I serve as the Director of Government Relations for Project Lead the Way (PLTW). Project Lead the Way is a national nonprofit organization, and our mission is to empower students to thrive in an evolving world. Today, that means being a leading provider in STEM education across the country. Specifically, we provide educational pathways and programs for students in grades PreK-12 in computer science, engineering, and biomedical sciences to equip students with in-demand transportable skills necessary to fill the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow.

I am writing in support of senate bill 757 and house bill 759, the Minnesota Computer science education advancement fund establishment. At PLTW we see this as an opportunity to expand access and support equity in computer science education for the state of Minnesota. This legislation supports teachers and their development, and students' skillsets to thrive in an evolving world. It is proven that students learning how to apply computational thinking and other technical skills will be transportable for students no matter what field they find themselves in the future. This mobility can change the trajectory of our students and open doors for them in the future.

In the annual State of Computer Science Education Report from Code.org, Minnesota rates 50th overall. According to the report, currently, in Minnesota, only 21% of high school students have access to high school computer science in the state, and of those students taking CS only 23% are female. The numbers also show CS is disproportionately offered by our metro-suburban districts. To tackle disparities in computer science education we also must look at equitable participation. This starts in elementary grades building experience, skills, and confidence to participate and excel in secondary grades computer science coursework.

Minnesota is a state that has a rich and strong history of high-quality education and has been a standout nationally in STEM education. This is also reflected in the growth in global STEM industries in the state and their commitment to growing in the state. It is in this light that the Minnesota legislators have a grand opportunity to close the gap for Minnesota students, teachers, and industry. To tell the story of giving Minnesota schools resources and supports to climb from 50th in the country to a national model for other states is a goal we can all support.

I urge you to pass senate bill 757 and house bill 759 and to support our students and their future in Minnesota.

Empowering students to thrive in an evolving world.



Sincerely,

Kernard D. Jones
Director of Government Relations
Project Lead The Way

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