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SciMathMN brings together a statewide STEM community to promote equitable and accessible STEM learning and workforce participation, empower lifelong learning, and inspire informed community action.

Dear Education Committee Members,

I write in support of HF759/SF757, the Minnesota Computer Science Education Advancement Act. At SciMathMN we see this bill as key in moving Minnesota forward with equitable access to foundational 21st-century skills and knowledge. All jobs today require digital skills, and moving Minnesota forward on computer science education, builds a more dynamic state economy and skills in high-demand, high-wage jobs.

SciMathMN is a non-profit STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) organization that brings together a statewide STEM community, promoting equitable STEM learning and workforce participation, empowering lifelong learning, and inspiring informed community action for all Minnesotans to engage in a dynamic STEM ecosystem, ready for life and work. We are the host of the Minnesota STEM Teachers Center, an online resource for all Minnesota teachers who teach students math or science.

HF759/SF757 is a comprehensive approach to the complex challenge of assuring that all Minnesota students have access to computer science education beginning in elementary school, that teachers are adequately prepared and supported, the state to have standards in computer science, that policymakers have access to transparent data on course access, and that we have an advisory committee of experts and stakeholders that can guide and inform this work on an ongoing basis.

Advanced Placement Computer Science courses act as a useful proxy for access to courses at the high school level. Minnesota's challenge for equity is revealed in the AP test takers. In 2020 only 1,806 high school exams were taken in AP Computer Science by high school students in Minnesota; of those only 23% were taken by female students; only 112 exams were taken by Hispanic/Latino/Latina students; only 82 exams were taken by Black/African American students; only 5 exams were taken by Native American/Alaskan students; only 1 exam was taken by Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (College Board, 2018). Only 84 schools (29% of MN schools with AP programs) offered an AP Computer Science course last year.

The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics observed in their recent report Diversity in STEM: Women, Minorities, and People with Disabilities "A diverse workforce provides the potential for innovation by leveraging different backgrounds, experiences, and points of view." For Minnesota to have an innovation economy we need to build opportunities for computer science knowledge starting early and continuing toward high school graduation. I urge that the committee pass HF759/SF757.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vic Dreier".

Vic Dreier
Board Chair
SciMathMN