

Dear Representative Hemmingsen-Jaeger,

My name is Tom Cozzolino, I am a middle school computer science teacher in Bloomington Public Schools. I am writing to express our strong support for HF3492, to help expand computer science education opportunities for our students in Bloomington and across Minnesota. It is imperative that we take steps to broaden access and participation in computer science education opportunities for our students, and HF3492 is a great step in that direction.

Technology is changing at an incredible pace, and continues to advance and reach into all areas of our lives. With current advances in AI, robotics, automation, and more it is easy to see that students will be working with many different technologies daily both in their personal and professional lives. It is critically important as educators to help equip students with the skills and mindsets they need to help navigate these changes and be prepared to solve problems that don't even exist yet.

A recent Code.org report of the current state of computer science education in all 50 states has listed Minnesota as 50 out of 50 for how our students are able to access computer science education. This is something that needs drastic and urgent changes if we want to help our students feel successful in their futures. Even if students do not want to go on to pursue a career in a computer science related field, or major in a related area in college, everyone will be interacting with technology in some way no matter what path they choose to pursue. Exploring computer science helps all students to be better able to leverage these technologies and open up new opportunities.

In Bloomington Public Schools we have been working to establish a K-12 Computer Science pathway for all students in order to ensure all students have equitable access to computer science education throughout their schooling. This work is ongoing but has already resulted in new classes being offered at all levels, more students engaging with computer science, integration of computer science skills into other curriculum areas, and additional extra-curricular opportunities as well. Students have shown great excitement and enthusiasm as they have created projects leveraging technologies to help solve problems that are important to them. Earlier this year in my classroom while we were exploring app development a student was able to create an app of a game to keep track of how often they are misgendered, in an attempt to playfully educate others on preferred gender pronouns as well as offer community and support to those who are often misgendered by others. Opportunities like this helped this student to express themselves and share something they feel strongly about, as well as offer help to others. This would not have been possible without a focus on computer science education and helping students leverage tools and technologies available to them.

Passing HF3492 is important to help expand access for all students to have similar opportunities in their schools. In Bloomington we are lucky to have a strong focus on creating K-12 computer science opportunities, but not all students, schools, and districts are in the same position. HF3492 would help our district to be able to build upon what we have started, but also allow other schools and districts to begin their own computer science programs.

I strongly urge you to support HF3492, and help Minnesota show its commitment to our students and their futures. Thank you for considering this important issue. I look forward to the positive impact this will have for our students.

Sincerely,

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