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Senate Education Finance Committee

April 2, 2025

SF 2255 - Governor's Education Finance Bill

CSforALL-MN Policy Working Group

On behalf of the CSforALL-MN Policy Working Group, thank you for hearing our testimony. The CSforALL-MN Policy Working Group is a diverse coalition representing education groups, the nonprofit sector, and industry who understand the critical need for more investment in computer science education.

We are extremely concerned that the Governor's revised budget defunds all support for computer science. Even the initial proposed \$1 million biennial appropriation was a baseline investment, enough only to maintain existing staff and administrative functions within the Minnesota Department of Education relating to computer science. Removing that minimal funding threatens to bring all statewide focus on computer science to a halt.

This committee knows well that Minnesota remains 48th in the country in access to computer science, a subject that is key for student success, economic growth, and industry innovation in our increasingly technological society. Computer science leads to higher scores on reading and math tests, equips students with problem-solving and computational thinking skills, and provides a foundation for AI literacy. It is an essential part of a holistic vision for education in Minnesota that prioritizes student achievement and career readiness. The return on investment from computer science is undeniable. Minnesota can continue its momentum on this critical discipline, but only if we maintain some level of state support.

In recognition of the difficult fiscal climate, we are simply requesting this committee consider holding computer science funding steady this biennium at \$1 million to support a full-time employee at MDE and capacity for additional grants to LEAs to support new computer science offerings. Retaining funding for a full-time Computer Science Supervisor position at the very least is non-negotiable. Only 6 states do not have such a position, and it is critical to have someone available as a resource for schools who can build community, raise awareness, and begin progress on the State Strategic Plan for Computer Science.

We urge you to consider the risks to our state's growth, workforce competitiveness, and future opportunities for students if state funding for computer science disappears. Thank you for your consideration.