

My name is Sierra Bonn, I'm a lifelong Kansas student, for K-12 education I was in USD 490 and I studied Engineering Technology at Wichita State University, where I am continuing my education to pursue a Master's in Innovation Design. I am the Assistant Director for Corporate Relations at the WSU Foundation, I am the founder of Let's Go Full STEAM Ahead!, and I serve as the co-chair for the Education Committee at FlagshipKansas.Tech.

Good afternoon, and thank you for allowing me to share my story with you today.

I'm here to share my support of HB 2466's intent to increase access to computer science education for Kansas students and to designate funding for educator professional development and certification. I believe it is vitally important to invest in our educators and our students, so that Kansas can continue to grow strategically, economically, and equitably.

When I was in 5th grade, my parents were divorced and my father was deployed. The way I coped with changes to my home life was by pouring myself into schoolwork. I was really good at math, so good that when it came time to enroll for sixth grade math, my teachers gave me an exam, and I tested out of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math. When I went to middle school as a 6th grader, I sat in the 8th grade algebra classroom with the "big kids." In 7th grade and 8th grade, I was bussed every other morning to the high school to take geometry and algebra 2.

However, once I got into high school, there was only one math credit available for me to take, Trigonometry/Pre-calc. But it was required that I complete 3 math credits in high school. I ended up taking a few classes at Butler Community College as dual-credit, but that was at personal expense and sometimes outside of the 8-3 school day. My teachers didn't know what to do with me on the days I wasn't in my college courses, so I was an Office Aide for 3 semesters, an Orchestra Aide for a semester, and I took one class called "In House Technologies" where I taught myself photoshop and worked on projects for clubs and extracurriculars.

I could have been taking a computer science course, preparing for my future, but it wasn't an option for me or my peers, and I felt immensely unprepared walking into my first CS class my sophomore year in college.

When we choose to invest in our students by providing computer science courses and funding for professional development and certifications for educators, we prepare the next generation of Kansans for college, for the workforce, or whatever their future holds.

We are in the era of innovation. In order for us to continue progressing as a society and growing our innovative workforce, we must set our students and future innovators up for success. Everyone deserves a basic understanding of computer science, and we can do that by passing HB 2466 to increase access for our students to computer science education, and to empower educators through dedicated funding, to receive professional development and certification.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of this legislation, and to advocate for Kansas students like me.