Testimony before the
House Education Committee
NEUTRAL on
**House Bill 2466 — Enacting the promoting advancement in computing knowledge act;
requiring computer science courses of instruction in high schools**
by
Game On for Kansas Schools
Judith Deedy, Executive Director
January 31, 2022

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit neutral testimony on House Bill 2466.

Game On for Kansas Schools is a nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy effort among Kansans who share a belief in high-quality public education as a right of all Kansas students. We advocate for Kansas public schools to ensure our teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members have the resources necessary to deliver quality education to all Kansas students. We inform communities across the state about education funding and policy issues and legislation affecting our students. The Game On team includes members representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), and our membership extends statewide.

There are aspects of this bill we support. We appreciate the computer science education grants and the implicit acknowledgment that we need more computer science educators. We also support strong computer science fundamentals for our students, and we are pleased the Kansas State Board of Education has already developed discrete standards for K-12 computer science education. We support Kansas's effort to incorporate the topics and fundamentals of computer science throughout grade school, middle school and high school.

While we appreciate that the Chair has stated that the graduation requirement will be removed and that this bill would allow online delivery of computer science classes, we are still concerned that it usurps the authority of the State Board of Education and our locally elected school boards in mandating the offering of computer science classes. We understand there is some legislative frustration with progress in this area, but we note that the Board of Education adopted Computer Science Model Standards[1] in 2019. Additionally, local school boards must retain the authority and flexibility to deliver required information in a way that works best for their districts and their unique population of students. We defer to the State Board of Education, superintendents and school board members on this particular bill, but we caution against unintended consequences or oversimplification of the issues districts face when attempting to offer computer science courses, especially during a time of teacher shortages.

We also feel compelled to go on the record to oppose the imposition of a graduation requirement in case there is a later attempt to amend this bill to include a graduation requirement and because we have similar issues with other graduation requirements that may be considered by this committee or others. As parents and teachers, we know that time is a resource in our schools. High school students already have to cover a lot of ground. For some students - especially those on college or career tech paths - it would difficult to fit another required course into their schedule. Being able to substitute a computer science course for another core science seems like an easy fix, but there are consequences

---

[1] https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Career-Standards-and-Assessment-Services/Content-Area-A-E/Computer-Science

to this type of substitution. Most colleges and universities currently do not allow computer science courses to meet the math or science entrance requirements, even if they count towards a high school graduation requirement.[2] Many students need to take four full years of math and four full years of science to adequately prepare for their college studies. Therefore, a student who elects to substitute a core science for computer science could be hindering their ability to enter a program or university in the future. Many students are introduced to computer science in ways other than high school coursework. Some are introduced to coding in elementary school, others take computer science in middle school, others engage in other computer science related material in extracurricular activities. Finally, we would like to remind the committee that while we support offering computer science in high schools, there are more careers that do not require computer science than those that do. Some of us recall our own education experience when we were told many of us needed to learn how to program these new computers. It turned out that we needed to be able to use computers, not to program them. Some of our classmates did go on to learn computer programming, but many of us have been successful in careers with merely being computer literate and not computer programmers. Our current high schoolers are being taught computer literacy without knowing computer science. For many students, band, orchestra, foreign language, photography, journalism or other electives may be more relevant to their future plans than computer science. Students already have a lot of requirements, and consistent with the Kansans Can initiative, should retain the freedom to pursue coursework that relates to their future plans, which may well not include computer science. For all of these reasons we cannot support this bill as long as it has a computer science graduation requirement.

Literacy in computer science concepts is a desirable educational goal for Kansas students. We appreciate the legislature's interest in making sure Kansas students are ready for their futures but urge attention to the difficulties districts may face in meeting the requirements of this bill.

---

[2] Code.org Advocacy Coalition (2018). State of Computer Science Education. Retrieved from https://code.org/files/2018_state_of_cs.pdf.