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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 894
County Boards of Education—Computer Science Courses

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2020
1:00 p.m.

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 894, requiring county boards of education to submit to the State Board of Education and the Maryland General Assembly a report on the number of computer science courses offered in each of the public schools within their county.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

One of the primary responsibilities of educators is to prepare our students for their futures, particularly their future careers. In the rapidly changing world in which we live, it is imperative that our young people be provided the skills, knowledge and abilities that will allow them to master jobs and opportunities that may as yet be conceived. One surefire way of doing this is to increase their access to the STEAM fields—science, technology, engineering, art and math—and to help them develop the mindset and thinking skills they will need to master the jobs found in the knowledge-based economy of today and tomorrow.

Increasing elementary and secondary students' access to computer science and computational thinking is a goal that many MSEA members support. This is why we were excited to support the Securing the Future: Computer Science Education for All Act of 2018 (Chapter 358).[1] Among the goals of the legislation was an effort to increase enrollment of historically underrepresented groups into computer science courses, including those delineated in SB 894. We enthusiastically supported the very intentional effort in the legislation to grow enrollment in computer science courses among female students, students from historically underrepresented communities, and students with disabilities. Time and again, we read in the news how the IT workforce is overwhelmingly male and predominantly white. Chapter 358 seeks to put an end to this trend by including specific outreach to students hailing from communities not often seen within the tech workforce. By requiring a report detailing the number and percentage of students from these

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[1] http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2018RS/Chapters_noln/CH_358_hb0281t.pdf (Accessed on February 29, 2020)

targeted groups who are enrolled in computer science courses, we are given the data required to determine if the efforts called for in law are on the path to success.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 894.