

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 531 Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force – Establishment Ways & Means Committee February 18, 2026

Oral Testimony (~320 words / 2 minutes)

Good afternoon Chair Wilkins and Esteemed Members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Mike Yu, and I have been coaching **FIRST Tech Challenge** Team 19458, Equilibrium.exe for the past seven years. My journey began in 2019 as a parent simply trying to find a team for my child. It was not easy. We faced rejection after rejection from established teams that had no room for new members due to the lack of school support and teams. Finally, in September 2019, we found a community based team willing to take us in.

Then, on December 25, 2019, we received devastating news: our coach had suddenly passed away. She was an engineer at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, and I was just a parent. We believed our season—and our journey—was over.

But something extraordinary happened. Four highly experienced teams in our area stepped in. They mentored us, trained us, and helped our students learn enough to finish the season. That year, we advanced to regionals and received the Judge's Cinderella Award. It was a testament to resilience, mentorship, and community.

One student on that team had been in the United States for only two years. She confided in me that she wanted to major in computer science, but her parents discouraged her, believing it would be too difficult for a girl and that she should pursue business instead. Today, she is a senior in college majoring in computer science and artificial intelligence. I can confidently say that FIRST gave her the confidence to pursue her passion—and showed her parents she could succeed.

This is why I continue to coach.

Based on a FIRST ten year Longitudinal Impact Study by Brandeis University, sixty-three percent of FIRST alumni are employed in STEM fields, and the program operates in 114 countries. FIRST is the only sport where every student can go pro. Beyond robotics, students gain community service experience and develop critical skills such as time management, project management, communication, leadership, and problem-solving.

FIRST doesn't just build robots. It builds futures.

I urge House Bill 531 move out of committee. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Yu, Coach
FIRST Tech Challenge Team 19458, Equilibrium.exe