COMMITTEE REPORT

January 27, 2021

**H. 3612**

Introduced by Reps. Lucas, Allison, M.M. Smith and Calhoon

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Read the first time January 12, 2021.

**THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WORKS**

To whom was referred a Bill (H. 3612) to amend the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, so as to enact the “South Carolina Computer Science Education Initiative Act”, etc., respectfully

**REPORT:**

That they have duly and carefully considered the same and recommend that the same do pass with amendment:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 2, Section 59‑29‑250, by adding an appropriately lettered subsection at the end to read:

/ (\_\_)(1) Before July 1, 2023, the Department of Education shall create a career pathways system for the information technology cluster that:

(a) aligns public education and postsecondary education systems and the career and technology education services provided within and across program providers;

(b) aligns with state and regional workforce needs;

(c) provides students, teachers, parents, and families with general information about career pathways and with strategies to support students in acquiring the academic, employability, and technical skills that employers demand; and

(d) promotes the involvement and cooperative effort of parents, teachers, and school counselors in assisting students in making these choices, in setting career goals, and in developing individual graduation plans to achieve these goals.

(2) Before July 1, 2024, the Department of Education shall develop, procure, or identify curricula that:

(a) are aligned with state computer science standards;

(b) are organized around the career pathways and aligned with state and regional workforce needs as determined by the Department of Commerce;

(c) provide students with strong academic and real world problem‑solving skills;

(d) provide students with individualized educational, academic, and career‑oriented choices and a greater exposure to career information and opportunities in information technology and computer programming; and

(e) provide students beginning in elementary school with the opportunity to learn coding and computer programming.

(3) Beginning July 1, 2023, the Department of Education annually shall issue a report to the General Assembly that documents the number of students who have completed a career pathway in information technology and that documents student access to and participation in coding and computer programming in this State. The information must:

(a) be provided at the state level and district level; and

(b) report on the availability of such instruction to students, including enrollment, based on such student demographics as gender, race/ethnicity, special education status, and poverty status.” /

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

MERITA A. ALLISON for Committee.

**STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT**

**Explanation of Fiscal Impact**

**State Expenditure**

This bill requires the State Board of Education, in consultation with EOC and the Office of the Governor, to adopt a statewide computer science plan on or before December 31, 2022. The bill also requires the State Board of Education to conduct, at least every five years, a cyclical review of grade appropriate standards for computer science, computational thinking, and computer coding for kindergarten through grade twelve. No later than the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, each public high school and public charter high school must offer at least one computer science course that meets certain criteria. Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, SDE must follow certain criteria to coordinate and lead the South Carolina Computer Science Education Initiative. SDE must design career pathways that connect students to postsecondary programs, degrees, or postsecondary credentials in high demand career fields. The State Board of Education must promulgate regulations to create certification pathways for computer science teachers no later than July 1, 2023. SDE must develop criteria for postsecondary computer science teacher preparation programs. Additionally, SDE must develop guidelines for use by school districts and schools outlining the educational and degree requirements for computer science teachers. CHE must determine if any financial incentives are needed by institutions of higher education to design programs to prepare and credential computer science teachers.

**State Department of Education.** SDE indicates that this bill will increase General Fund expenses by $3,380,000 in FY 2021-22.  Of this amount, $3,280,000 is recurring, of which $3,000,000 is for professional development, certification attainment, and equipment for the required computer science courses.  The remaining $280,000 in recurring funds is for 2 FTEs, course materials, and design costs for the development of the required computer science courses for VirtualSC. Non-recurring funds of $100,000 are needed every five years to implement the standards revision requirement change from seven to five years.  Also, SDE indicates that this bill could increase recurring General Fund expenses of the agency by $120,000 in FY 2022-23 for additional state certified adjunct teachers, materials, and course development to meet expected course enrollment demands. Further, SDE indicates that the State Board of Education approved standards for the development and approval of teacher preparation programs leading to certification in computer science in 2020.

**State Agency Schools.** The Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities indicates that the school’s students currently complete computer science courses through VirtualSC and plans to continue to offer computer science courses in this manner. If the school is required to hire a teacher for the course, the bill would increase expenses by $16,000 for an adjunct position in FY 2021-22. The Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe indicates that the bill would increase expenses in FY 2021-22 for new staff to teach the course, computer hardware and software, additional licensing, and additional classroom space. However, the agency could not quantify the amount of additional expenses at this time. The Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School indicates that any expenses associated with this bill can be managed within existing appropriations. Based upon these responses, the bill is expected to increase expenses for state agency schools for FY 2021-22, however the amount is undetermined.

**Education Oversight Committee.** EOC indicates that this bill requires the agency to perform activities that can be conducted within the normal course of agency business. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on EOC in FY 2021-22.

**Commission on Higher Education.** The bill tasks the commission with determining what, if any, financial incentives are needed by institutions of higher learning to design programs to prepare and credential computer science teachers.  These activities are conducted in the normal course of the commission’s activities.  Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on the agency.

**Local Expenditure**

This bill requires each public high school and public charter high school to offer at least one computer science course that meets certain criteria no later than the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

SDE indicates that some districts have the necessary staff and resources to provide the required courses, while other districts may need to hire additional staff, allow students to utilize dual enrollment to take the courses at a university or technical college, or utilize a virtual program. The expenses related to additional FTEs vary by district. For dual enrollment, the state currently pays approximately $261 per student for dual enrollment courses (EFA base student cost x 70% for state portion x .15 for the dual enrollment weight). SDE indicates that this is frequently insufficient to cover the cost of the dual enrollment courses, and any additional expenses would be the district’s responsibility but are undetermined. SDE also indicates that schools could contract with VirtualSC for the required computer science course for a full class of students that would be taught by a VirtualSC teacher. Also, a district may contract with VirtualSC to work with their district to establish a local district operated virtual program using teachers from the district. In these cases, the school would pay a fee per license that is used by the school to cover the instructional materials for the course. Therefore, this bill is expected to increase local school district expenses by an undetermined amount in FY 2021-22.

Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director

Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, SO AS TO ENACT THE “SOUTH CAROLINA COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE ACT” BY ADDING SECTION 59‑29‑250 SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE EXPANSION AND ENHANCEMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS THROUGH THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A STATEWIDE COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION PLAN AND THE REQUIREMENT THAT EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL OFFERS AT LEAST ONE COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSE THAT MEETS CERTAIN CRITERIA.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act must be known and may be cited as the “South Carolina Computer Science Education Initiative Act”.

SECTION 2. Article 1, Chapter 29, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑29‑250. (A) The purpose of this section is to continue to expand access to computer science learning experiences to all students because computer science supports literacy, math, problem‑solving, and technological skills, and advances productivity in every discipline, industry, and profession.

(B) On or before December 31, 2022, the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee and the Office of the Governor, shall adopt a statewide computer science plan. The plan shall establish goals for improving K‑12 computer science education. Goals shall include, but not be limited to, increased access for computer science education opportunities in rural areas of the state, and methods to increase the number of computer science educators. The plan shall also list strategies and respective timelines for reaching the goals developed by the Board.

(C) The State Board of Education shall conduct, at least every five years, a cyclical review of grade appropriate standards for computer science, computational thinking, and computer coding for grades kindergarten through grade twelve. Experts and officials from higher education, business and industry, to include information technology or computer science, must be included in the review and development of the standards.

(D) No later than the beginning of the 2022‑2023 School Year, each public high school and public charter high school must offer at least one computer science course that:

(1) is rigorous and standards‑based;

(2) meets or exceeds the curriculum standards and requirements established by the State Board of Education;

(3) meets the needs of diverse students who will pursue postsecondary education or who will enter careers in computing and information technology upon graduation; and

(4) is made available in a traditional classroom setting, in a dual‑enrollment course, blended‑learning environment, online‑based, or other technology‑based format tailored to meet the needs of each participating student.

Information on computer science course offerings and student enrollment must be reflected on the annual high school report cards.

(E) Beginning in the 2022‑2023 School Year, the Department of Education shall:

(1) employ one full‑time employee whose sole responsibility is to coordinate and lead the South Carolina Computer Science Education Initiative, provided the employee must have prior work experience in the computer science or information technology industry;

(2) support K‑12 academic and computer science teachers in designing interdisciplinary, project‑based instruction and assignments that engage students in applying literacy, math, and computational thinking skills to solve problems;

(3) design career pathways that connect students to postsecondary programs, degrees, or postsecondary credentials in high demand career fields including, but not limited to, cybersecurity, information systems, informatics, graphic design, computer engineering, and software development as identified by the Department of Commerce;

(4) offer professional development and teacher endorsements to new teachers who will teach computer science;

(5) provide information and materials which identify emerging career opportunities in computer science and related fields to parents, students, teachers, and guidance counselors; and

(6) assist districts in developing partnerships with business, industry, higher education, and communities to provide afterschool and extracurricular activities that engage students in computer science.

(F) No later than July 1, 2023, The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to create certification pathways for computer science teachers. The Department of Education shall develop criteria for postsecondary computer science teacher preparation programs.

(G) No later than July 1, 2023, recognizing that successful implementation of computer science education requires effective instruction, the Department of Education shall develop guidelines for use by school districts and schools outlining the educational and degree requirements appropriate for computer science teachers. The Commission on Higher Education shall determine what, if any, financial incentives are needed by institutions of higher education to design programs to prepare and credential computer science teachers.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval of the Governor.

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