AMENDED

January 28, 2021

**H. 3612**

Introduced by Reps. Lucas, Allison, M.M. Smith, Calhoon, Govan, Davis, Murray, Gilliard, Carter, Anderson and Weeks

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Read the first time January 12, 2021.

**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.

Amend Title To Conform

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.

(H)(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.”

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

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