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Senate Education Committee

Michigan Senate
201 Townsend Street
Lansing, MI 48933

Chairwoman Polehanki and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

On behalf of NAF, I am writing in strong support of H.B. 5649 that would require a computer science course to be offered in public high schools throughout Michigan, thereby providing additional opportunities for students to prepare themselves for the workforce skills that are in demand.

NAF is a national education non-profit that brings schools and businesses together to transform the high school experience and to better align education and workforce opportunities through career focused academies – including academies focused in areas such as engineering, IT and finance. Our academies are integrated into existing public high schools and put students – especially students who may lack access - on a path to achieving their full potential. Through integrating our industry partners in our academy design, NAF also ensures businesses have the skilled and diverse workforce pipeline they need to strengthen their local communities and compete globally. NAF proudly works with over 25 high schools throughout Michigan, supporting 40+ academies and reaching over 4,500 students.

High quality computer science education throughout K-12 education is critical to producing a workforce that has the technical skills needed to meet current labor market demands. Computer science skills are not only in high demand in current job opportunities, they are also driving the innovation and entrepreneurship we see growing the economy across Michigan. In today's workforce, computing skills are foundational for any college or career pathway students are interested in post high school – including fields that are not necessarily technology-oriented. Providing an opportunity to engage in computer science classes in high school will benefit students in not only learning how to use new technologies and meet labor demands, but computer science also teaches students to think critically, problem solve, and collaborate. These are skills that are applicable to any career path a student chooses and will help to produce a robust workforce in Michigan that is ready to take on the jobs that have not even been invented yet.

NAF supports the passage of H.B. 5649, as it will provide opportunities for Michigan students to be prepared for the jobs of the future through critical computer science skill development in addition to producing a competitive workforce in Michigan. We appreciate the Michigan Department of Education's support for this legislation and stand ready to assist in your consideration of this bill in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dughi
CEO | NAF