

August 6, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Smith, and Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry:

As you begin the process of reconciling the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 bills passed by the House and Senate, we write to urge you to include the text of the Providing Resources and Organization to Maximize Opportunities for Training and Education in STEM (PROMOTES) Act in the final NDAA. This important provision provides a foundational education in computer science and cybersecurity for Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) cadets, addressing the U.S. technology talent shortage while increasing the diversity of students entering technology career pathways.

The United States in general, as well as the U.S. military and the industrial partners that support our country's national security, struggle to find and produce sufficient numbers of Americans trained to succeed in computer science and cybersecurity careers, and emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data science. JROTC can help to overcome some of these systemic shortages by providing education and opportunities for this public service-oriented, highly diverse population of young Americans who very often demonstrate a penchant for computer science and related subjects. JROTC is one of the oldest youth programs in the US, operating over 100 years and now collaborating with more than 3,400 high schools and serving more than 500,000 cadets. Each of the military services offer a JROTC program of instruction. The curriculum emphasizes citizenship, character development, leadership development, and community service.

JROTC provides youth from all different backgrounds an opportunity to gain valuable life skills and prepare for future careers. JROTC cadets are 40 percent female, represent a majority-minority student population, and are strongly represented in schools serving economically disadvantaged populations (over 50 percent Title 1 schools). Yet today, only 32% of JROTC cadets have access to an Advanced Placement (AP) computer science course at their school, and the schools that lack AP computer science courses are disproportionately located in low-income and minority communities.

Recognizing the need to address this gap and the potential for engaging JROTC youth in high demand science and technology fields, Congress updated Title 10 in the FY 2020 NDAA to include "instruction or activities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics" within JROTC to better prepare students for the future of the workforce. The PROMOTES Act language included in the House's FY 2021 NDAA builds on this by authorizing the Secretary of Defense to issue grants for JROTC STEM training and education to fund and support instructors; acquisition of materials, hardware, and software; efforts and events that improve the quality of the educational experience; the development of

travel opportunities, mentoring programs, and informal education; as well as the pursuit of certifications in STEM subjects. The Senate has also included report language underscoring the talent development opportunity offered by JROTC.

The JROTC STEM education, computer science, and cybersecurity programs supported by the PROMOTES Act will focus resources where they are needed most to better prepare students for in-demand careers and our national security needs. We respectfully request that this legislative text be included as part of the final FY 2021 NDAA.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
Intel Corporation
Aerospace Industries Association
Amazon
Arizona Technology Council
BSA | The Software Alliance
Bootstrap
Code.org
CodeforCLE
CodeVA
The College Board
Computer Science Teachers Association
Computing Technology Industry Association
CSforALL
CS4Alabama
CS4TX
Girl Scouts of the USA
Global Grid for Learning, PBC
Lockheed Martin Corporation
Micron
Microsoft
National Math and Science Initiative
Navy League of the United States
ON Semiconductor
SAP
SciTech Institute
SIA
Start Engineering
TechNet
Technology Association of Oregon
ZT Systems

CC: Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy
Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer