

**THE WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
OF COLORADO**

WFCO Testimony in support of HB17-1184
For Senate Education Committee
March 23, 2017

Thank you, Mister Chair and Committee Members, for your consideration of House Bill 17-1184. I am Louise Myrland, vice president of programs for The Women's Foundation of Colorado, and I respectfully request your support of this bill to modernize technology education in Colorado's schools.

The Women's Foundation of Colorado is committed to supporting women in achieving economic self-sufficiency. A key strategy to meet this goal is connecting girls and women with education and careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). We do this by partnering with leading STEM employers who share our commitment to improving gender equity in their workforce and investing in organizations across Colorado helping girls build STEM skills, interest, and confidence. Through research, we know women comprise nearly half of the workforce overall, yet they make up less than a third of the STEM workforce in Colorado.¹ Early opportunities to build STEM skills and connect with expert industry role models are effective ways to build interest and confidence in STEM, and HB17-1184 will help more Colorado students access these valuable learning experiences.

STEM fields are growing quickly here in Colorado and offer entrepreneurial and high-earning opportunities at every level of education. Technology-intensive industries have been growing at three times the rate of other industries in the United States and Colorado has a

Building resources and leading change so that every woman and girl in Colorado achieves her full potential.

Louise V. Myrland, vice president, programs

louisem@wfc.org | 303.285.2973

The Women's Foundation of Colorado | 1901 E. Asbury Avenue, Denver, CO 80208 | www.wfc.org

comparatively higher proportion of companies in the information technology sector, at 12 percent,ⁱⁱ contributing significantly to the state's economy. The tech sector generated 11.5 percent of the gross state product in 2015ⁱⁱⁱ. Many of these opportunities, and so much of modern life, require technology skills: seven of the 10 largest STEM occupations are computer-related^{iv} and more than 80 percent of STEM jobs are in computing and engineering.^v

There is a tremendous opportunity to help Colorado students develop these essential skills by incorporating digital literacy skills into the state academic standards when they are updated next year. In order to enter and succeed in a wide range of careers, Colorado students must develop mastery of technical skills and the ability to apply these skills across academic subject areas. By adding technology skills to the content standards and creating a resource bank for schools and districts that choose to establish or enhance computer science offerings, HB1184 will better prepare Colorado students, including young women, for success in these innovative and growing fields, whether they choose to pursue post-secondary education or enter the workforce after graduation. The Women's Foundation supports opportunities for Colorado's girls to achieve economic self-sufficiency by improving their learning and earning potential through STEM and that is why we request your support of HB17-1184 today. Thank you.

ⁱ Institute for Women's Policy Research, Status of Women in the States: The Economic Status of Women in Colorado. <http://statusofwomendata.org/app/uploads/2015/10/R467.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Hess, C., Hegewisch, A., Yi, Y., Williams, C., and Augeri, J. 2013. The Status of Women and Girls in Colorado. Institute for Women's Policy Research and the Women's Foundation of Colorado. <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-status-of-women-and-girls-in-colorado>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.coloradotechnology.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=811445&hhSearchTerms=%22gross+and+state+and+product%22>

^{iv} Koebel, T. 2015. 7 Things to Know if You're Thinking About a STEM Career. U.S. Departments of Labor Blog. <https://blog.dol.gov/2015/04/18/7-things-to-know-if-youre-thinking-about-a-stem-career/>

^v Corbett, C. and Hill, C. 2015. Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing. American Association of University Women. <http://www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation/>

Building resources and leading change so that every woman and girl in Colorado achieves her full potential.

Louise V. Myrland, vice president, programs

louisem@wfco.org | 303.285.2973

The Women's Foundation of Colorado | 1901 E. Asbury Avenue, Denver, CO 80208 | www.wfco.org