March 29, 2019

Chairman Tim Ryan   Ranking Member Jaime Herrera Beutler
U.S. House of Representatives   U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations   Committee on Appropriations
Legislative Branch Subcommittee   Legislative Branch Subcommittee
H-305, The Capitol   Washington, DC 20515
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Herrera Beutler,

I am writing you to request the Subcommittee appropriate funding for the Congressional App Challenge to assist the program with issues of scaling stemming from enormous growth since its launch in 2015. The Congressional App Challenge has quickly become the most prestigious student coding competition in America. The corresponding demo day for winners, called #HouseOfCode, has become the new national science fair.

The Congressional App Challenge (CAC) is an officially-sanctioned competition of the United States House of Representatives designed to inspire students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through district-wide competitions. In 2018, 5,229 students from 223 districts coded 1,715 functioning apps.

The Congressional App Challenge has grown over 200% in four years, but even this has hardly scratched the surface of the potential impact for this critical program. The demand for STEM jobs in the United States continues to far outstrip the pace of domestic talent production[1], and these careers represent a critical path to good paying middle-class careers. With additional resources, the CAC intents to expand the number of participating districts and reach deeper into those districts to increase student participation in the program.

Per the rules for Officially-Sanctioned Competitions, the Committee on House Administration has appointed the Internet Education Foundation (IEF) as the official coordinator of the CAC.

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[1] "STEM Depiction Opportunities (The White House, February 10th, 2016), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/imageofstemdepictiondoc_02102016_clean.pdf

IEF provides all the materials, support, staffing, and databases needed for Member offices to host successful contests for their constituents. IEF is responsible for managing all resources of applicants, including the over 5,000 student applications from 2018. IEF also promotes the competition in districts across America by reaching out directly to schools, computer science teachers, and students through partnerships, emails, and social media.

Specifically, we ask the Subcommittee to:
❏   Provide $250,000 in appropriations funding to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) so that it can administer the CAC as an "Officially-Sanctioned Competitions" in Fiscal Year 2020.

Please accept this public witness testimony in support of funding for the Congressional App Challenge.

Sincerely,

Joseph Alessi
Program Director
Congressional App Challenge