Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Blunt and Cole and Ranking Members Murray and DeLauro,

As both chambers of Congress advance Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 appropriations bills, we write as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (jointly referred to as the Tri-Caucus), to share our serious concern that many minority students are underrepresented in computer science, and to urge you to provide $250 million for Computer Science for All discretionary grants in the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill.

Computer science is a basic skill in the 21st century global economy and the opportunity to learn computer science should be provided to all students in the United States. Already, 50 percent of jobs today require some digital skills. By the end of the decade, some 77% of jobs will require technological skills. However, today, only one in four schools in the U.S. teach any computer science courses. Last year there were less than 50,000 computer science graduates nationwide, yet there are more than 550,000 computing jobs currently unfilled in the United States. We are at risk of falling behind other nations who have prioritized the teaching of computer science in their countries if we do not take action. Computer science education in K-12 classrooms across America is essential if we want to create more American jobs and maintain American competitiveness.

Underrepresented populations in particular lack access to computer science courses that will prepare them for tomorrow's workforce. Although underrepresented minorities (African American and Hispanic students) and female students who take the Advanced Placement computer science course in high school are over 7 times and 10 times more likely to major in computer science in college, respectively, only 9% of AP computer science test takers in 2015 were Hispanic, only 4% were African American and only 22% were female.

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Also notable is that only 184 Native American students took the AP CS exam nationwide last year. This is an issue that leads to a lack of diversity amongst computer science college graduates. According to a 2010 survey, 98% of all computer science college majors reported exposure to computer science prior to college.

Hispanics, African Americans and Pacific Islanders are all underrepresented when it comes to computer science college graduates. Only 9% of computer science graduates are Hispanic, only 8% are African American and a mere 85 graduates are Pacific Islander. Furthermore, only 6% of people currently employed in computing occupations are Hispanic and only 8% are African American.

A small Federal investment in K-12 computer science is needed to close the skills gap, fill the workforce demand, and boost our country's competitive position globally. Computer Science for All development grants would help jumpstart expansion of computer science coursework in districts across the country.

The Tri-Caucus is united in our belief that in order to lead the world in innovation, we must make an investment in our children's education now by providing $250 million for this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Linda T. Sánchez
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC)

G.K. Butterfield
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)

Judy Chu
Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)