Langevin Leads Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers to Introduce the STEM to STEAM Act of 2017

Today, U.S. Representatives Jim Langevin (D-RI), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), and Elise Stefanik (R-NY) introduced the STEM to STEAM Act of 2017, which would promote the integration of art and design into the National Science Foundation’s (NSF’s) Advancing Informal Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Learning program. The bill introduction was announced at a joint briefing hosted by the Congressional STEAM and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucuses on the importance of integrating STEAM into CTE programs.

“Art and design promote creativity and innovation, skills that are essential to the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” said Rep. Langevin, co-chair of the Congressional CTE Caucus. “In order to maintain our economic competitiveness in the 21st Century, we need to cultivate innovation by educating our students so that they emerge as the most creative graduates on the planet.

Incorporating art and design into informal STEM education programs will help spur interest and excitement about STEM learning, and I applaud pioneers like the Rhode Island School of Design for leading this integrated approach.”

The bill directs the NSF to award grants to support the design and testing of informal STEAM programs to improve educational outcomes, advance the field of STEAM education, and promote creativity and innovation. Informal learning projects include afterschool programs; museums, nature labs, and other exhibition initiatives; and science and technology center community programs, among other out-of-school learning opportunities.

“STEAM education engages students, teaches them valuable skills, and helps them become more creative,” said Rep. Bonamici, co-chair of the Congressional STEAM Caucus. “I am pleased to partner with Congressman Langevin and Congresswoman Stefanik on the bipartisan STEM to STEAM Act, which leverages resources at the National Science Foundation to research and develop effective STEAM education programs that promote creativity and innovation. As co-founder and co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional STEAM Caucus, I am an enthusiastic supporter of STEAM education because it prepares the next generation to succeed in the 21st century economy. STEAM education will help America thrive and compete by developing a workforce that is highly-skilled and creative.”

“By incorporating the artist’s perspective into the important work being done in the STEM fields, we can challenge our students to think outside the box and create new solutions to complex problems,” said Rep. Stefanik, co-chair of the Congressional STEAM Caucus. “As our world’s challenges become more complex employers need workers who can think outside of the box and creatively attack problems. This holds true whether you are manufacturing a vehicle door, maintaining an automated system or designing the cockpit of a new aircraft. These skills are in demand and will be of critical importance to our 21st century economy.”

“A RISD education emphasizes that in order to effectively tackle the critical and complex challenges of today’s world, our graduates need to use their creativity, inventiveness, and diverse perspectives to lead,” said Rosanne Somerson, President of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), which was represented at today’s briefing in recognition of its pioneering contributions to the STEAM movement. “They achieve this with confidence in the face of unpredictability that accompanies change. Inherent in this work are principles aligned with STEAM, principles that promote conceptual fluency, strong problem-framing and problem-solving capabilities, and the ability to shape an idea or outcome from something that never existed before. Thanks to the dedicated members of the Congressional STEAM and CTE caucuses, this bill will open new avenues for the impact of STEAM education to enhance learning outcomes more broadly, increasing avenues for advancement, exploration, and innovation.”