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January 28, 2020

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

From: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer, Legislative Director, Office of the Attorney General

Re: HB 215 Criminal Law – Crimes Involving Computers – Ransomware (SUPPORT)

House Bill 215 adds “ransomware” to Criminal Law § 7-302. It defines ransomware and makes it illegal to “knowingly possess ransomware” with the intent to introduce it into the computer of another without their permission. If passed, violations of this statute would constitute a misdemeanor subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years, a fine not exceeding \$10,000.00, or both. The bill has an effective date of October 1, 2020.

As Chair of the Maryland Cybersecurity Council, the Attorney General is well aware of the threat ransomware poses to our state and local governments, businesses, and communities. Just last May, Baltimore City was struck with a crippling so-called “RobbinHood” ransomware attack that stymied government operations for weeks. Hackers demanded 13 bitcoin (approximately \$76,280) in exchange for keys to restore access to critical computer systems. The demand included an escalation clause that, after four days, increased the key costs. Although Baltimore City elected not to pay the ransom, its Department of Public Works, Police, and Transportation Departments, among others, reported email and phone system interruptions.

House Bill 215 will serve as a deterrent to would-be hackers and an effective enforcement mechanism with criminal consequences for those who are undeterred. The Office of the Attorney General strongly supports passage of this legislation and urges a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committee

