



FAVORABLE

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 1128

Labor and Employment – Workforce Development – Talent Innovation Fund

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POSITION: FAVORABLE

March 6, 2024

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1128 on behalf of our Board of Directors and membership.

The Cybersecurity Association of Maryland, Inc. (“CAMI”) supports SB 982. CAMI is a statewide, 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization established in 2015, created to drive the growth of Maryland's cybersecurity industry. Our membership includes over 600 firms ranging in size from Fortune 500 companies to solo owner operators and represents nearly 100,000 Maryland employees.

We agree with Governor Moore’s sentiment that in order to “win the decade” we need to deploy innovative strategies to cultivate talent, particularly in industries like cyber, quantum, artificial intelligence, biotech, and advanced manufacturing. With more than 31,000 open cybersecurity jobs in Maryland, the Talent Innovation Fund is poised to serve as a critical mechanism to produce this talent.

The Talent Innovation Fund will allow employers in emerging industries to define skills gaps and workforce training needs which will translate directly into a training curriculum. This will foster meaningful talent development that meets industry demand and provides high paying jobs for Maryland citizens. Importantly, the pilot of the fund will be used for a competitive grant to pilot cyber ranges, which are virtual settings used for cybersecurity training.

Cyber ranges have proven to be a beneficial, hands-on strategy for individuals to hone technical skills and experience and respond to real-life cyber threats. The use of cyber ranges yields a stronger and more prepared workforce. Given Maryland’s prominence in cybersecurity and research strengths with emerging technologies like quantum and AI, this bill will help secure these past investments and solidify Maryland’s continued growth and competition for the jobs of the 21st century.

The Talent Innovation Fund is an important tool to scale effective training programs to “win the decade.” As such, CAMI strongly supports this effort and respectfully requests your committee to move this important initiative forward.