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BILL: Senate Bill 981
TITLE: Local Cybersecurity Preparedness and Local Cybersecurity Support Fund - Alterations
DATE: March 7, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 981 as it is intended to ensure major increased investments of \$10 million annually to the Local Cybersecurity Support Fund. However, MABE requests an amendment to remove the strict, deadline-based, mandate that all school systems implement multifactor authentication for all school employees and provide endpoint detection and response on all system-owned devices accessed by employees By July 1, 2025.

Several cybersecurity bills were enacted in 2022 to address state and local government policies and practices toward the goal of major overhauls and upgrades in cybersecurity, including the creation of the Local Cybersecurity Support Fund. School systems were included in these new laws, and are working to with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to implement the many cybersecurity assessments, reports, and enhancements called for under these recent laws.

However, MABE opposes the manner in which this bill would mandate local school system compliance with the bill's new cybersecurity standards. The bill is simply too specific and prescriptive regarding the measures school systems would be mandated to have in place by mid-2025. Therefore, MABE requests amendments to remove these provisions of the bill.

MABE, on behalf of all local boards of education, certainly appreciates and supports the need for increased investments in the security of all school system information technology systems. School systems throughout the nation, and in Maryland, have experienced first-hand the dire consequences of cyberattacks. These experiences are having significant impacts on school system budgets in areas including technology, staffing, professional development, insurance, and risk management. MABE appreciates that Senate Bill 981 highlights the need for increased state spending on school system cybersecurity, but by authorizing and not mandating state funding in future budgets, the bill may fail to adequately address the costs imposed by the bill. In addition, the \$10 million identified in the bill would not be sufficient nor provided in time to assist local school systems in fulfilling all of the bill's requirements.

Local school systems support continued efforts to identify and dedicate the additional state and local resources needed to ensure continuous improvement in cybersecurity across all state agencies and among Maryland's diverse array of local governments and school systems. And MABE assures the legislature that on behalf of local school systems we are working in collaboration with the State to build a robust and resilient cybersecurity bulwark against cyberattacks and their disruptive, costly, and at times devastating impacts on Maryland's public school systems.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 981 with the amendments described above.