Maryland K12 Technology Leadership Forum Board

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Maryland K12 Technology Leadership Forum
RE: Senate Bill 981 – Local Cybersecurity Preparedness and Local Cybersecurity Support Fund - Alterations
DATE: March 5, 2024
POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland K12 Technology Leadership Forum (MDK12 TLF or TLF) is an independent organization representing Information Technology (IT) personnel from all 24 Maryland Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The purpose of the TLF is to hold a collaborative forum for the support and advocacy of technology issues related to Public K12 Education in Maryland. The TLF is governed by a representative Board of the CIO's/Information Technology Leaders of all 24 LEAs in Maryland.

The MDK12 TLF Cybersecurity Committee (MDK12 TLFCC or TLFCC) is an independent committee authorized by the TLF to coordinate and share K-12 cybersecurity information, initiatives, and opportunities with each of the 24 LEAs and our partners around the state. The membership of the TLFCC is made up of the TLF and any other LEA employees that deal with school system cybersecurity.

Maryland Public Schools need personnel and resources in the fight against cybersecurity threats. Public Schools have increasingly become the number one target of cyber criminals. Maryland school systems hold personal and confidential information on more than 890,000 students, 128,000 active employees, and countless retirees from across the state. Maryland school districts have been the target of cybersecurity attacks that have interrupted our mission of education and our duty to protect the vital data entrusted to us. The proposed $10 million is a good beginning amount but not adequate to fully fund the initiatives in the bill. If all $10 million were to be distributed to the 24 LEAs, it would equate to approximately $6.25 per user (students and active staff members) that must be safeguarded against cybersecurity threats. Future increases in the amount of funding and staffing are needed for all school districts.

The MDK12 TLF and TLFCC jointly support Senate Bill 981 with Amendments.

The amendments recommended by the TLF and TLFCC are:

1) Under § 3.5–407 (b)(2) the wording to be changed to "complete a third-party cybersecurity preparedness assessment.".
2) Remove § 3.5–407 (c) as this is encompassed by the new language in (b)(2).
3) Under § 3.5–405 include language to require a minimum of one cybersecurity training for all employees or more as deemed necessary by the local school system.
4) Add wording for the priority of the additional $10 million funding.
   a. First priority for school districts to meet requirements under § 3.5–405.
   b. Second priority for regional information security officers.

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c. Third priority for school districts to procure and implement cybersecurity measures as outlined in the bill to increase their cybersecurity maturity.