

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Katie Fry-Hester  
Maryland State Senate  
James Senate Office Building, Room 202  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Fry-Hester,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Vennard Wright, and I am writing to you in my capacity as the former Chief Information Officer (CIO) for Prince George's County, MD, and WSSC Water. With a career dedicated to enhancing technological infrastructure and ensuring the cybersecurity of public services, I have observed firsthand the critical importance of robust cybersecurity frameworks, especially at the local level.

I am reaching out to express my support for Maryland Senate Bill 981, which aims to establish the Local Cybersecurity Preparedness and Local Cybersecurity Support Fund. This bill signifies a vital step forward in our collective effort to safeguard Maryland's digital infrastructure from evolving threats. However, I would like to propose specific amendments to enhance its effectiveness based on my professional experience.

The proposed legislation mandates the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to interact primarily with Emergency Managers for the implementation and coordination of cybersecurity measures. While Emergency Managers play an integral role in our state's safety and preparedness strategies, they are typically not cybersecurity subject matter experts (SMEs). This could inadvertently create a bottleneck and add an unnecessary layer of communication during critical times, such as a data breach or cyber-attack.

To address this concern, I propose the following amendment to the bill:

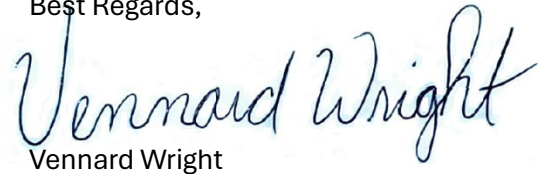
**Amendment Proposal:** Require the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to establish direct communication channels with local IT officials, including CIOs and IT Managers, in addition to Emergency Managers. This approach will facilitate real-time sharing of information and swift implementation of mitigation strategies during cybersecurity incidents. Local IT officials are equipped with the specific technical expertise required to address cybersecurity threats effectively and should be integral to the communication loop.

This amendment does not undermine the importance of Emergency Managers but rather enhances the overall response capability by leveraging the specialized skills of local IT professionals. By ensuring that local IT officials are directly involved, we can improve the responsiveness and efficiency of our cybersecurity initiatives.

I believe that with these amendments, Maryland Senate Bill 981 will offer a more comprehensive and practical framework for bolstering our local cybersecurity infrastructure. I am available to discuss this proposal in more detail and provide further insights based on my experience in the field.

Thank you for your consideration of these amendments and for your ongoing commitment to the cybersecurity and welfare of Maryland's communities. I look forward to the possibility of working together to strengthen our state's defenses against cyber threats.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vennard Wright". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V".

Vennard Wright