

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 1128: Labor and Employment – Workforce Development - Talent Innovation Fund

Dear Chair Beidle:

On behalf of Baltimore Cyber Range (BCR Cyber), I write in strong support of the **House Bill 1128: Labor and Employment – Workforce Development - Talent Innovation Fund**. I'd like to tell you a little bit about my life story as a way to illustrate why this bill is necessary.

I grew up with a great education as an honor roll student, however I didn't finish high school traditionally. Instead, I went to Job Corps to get my GED/HSD. It took almost 8 years later, to realize I wanted more for myself, but I didn't want to be in debt hundreds of thousands of dollars in my mid-twenties. After gaining a few skills along the way, I came across BCR Cyber. I took advantage of BCR Cyber's no-cost ICE-T program as a SNAP E&T recipient. I graduated from the program in 2019 with my CompTIA certifications and training. Shortly after, I worked for a Managed Services Provider in a contract position configuring laptops for distribution to schools. I then transitioned to full-time employment with BCR Cyber and have been with them for the last four years.

I'm now the Government Programs Manager at BCR Cyber and I wear many hats, but the most rewarding is being able to assist others gain a career in Cybersecurity. My employment with BCR Cyber allowed me to get off of SNAP/food stamps years ago, and I'm happy to say that I'm able to pay all of my bills myself, with enough money for my daughter and my own savings and investments.

Not only are IT/cybersecurity careers lucrative, they are essential. Most of what society uses on a day-to-day basis is technology based. Whether it's personal, enterprise, or government devices, they are all vulnerable to being compromised and it's necessary to have a well-trained cyber workforce.

In many ways, I think that my story illustrates why this bill is necessary. I've been able to succeed because of the public-private partnership between the State of Maryland's Department of Labor and BCR Cyber.

It's really tough to get into these jobs without training and experience and this program enabled me to get both. They met me where I was in life and provided the training that I needed to succeed.

There are over 31,000 cybersecurity job vacancies in Maryland alone. Truthfully, we don't have a chance to fill them if we don't scale up these efforts and enact bills like this one. Thousands more people like me who would benefit from expanding these programs.

We need to fill these jobs to build our economy equitably for all Marylanders and so that our state is more secure. Please give the Department of Labor the tools that they need to create these partnerships.

I ask you to please support House Bill 1128. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Khadejah Lovelace

Government Programs Manager, BCR Cyber