

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**. Ensuring a strong talent pipeline to fill cyber placement requirements is critical not just to our company, but to the 25+ Maryland-based private industry companies that comprise our employer consortium. By supporting House Bill 1128, the State of Maryland will be able to provide a much-needed, readily available talent pipeline for the cyber industry in the state to utilize and remain competitive nationally. According to industry expert Cyberseek, Maryland has **31,000 vacancies right now** in cybersecurity. This bill would provide the necessary public-private partnerships to dramatically accelerate this much needed workforce as well as cutting edge industries and technology like quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

Working with Maryland's community colleges, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD DOL) and local employers, BCR Cyber's Cybersecurity Pathways Across Maryland / Employment Advancement Right Now Advanced Cyber Training (CPAM / EARN ACT) program has already trained over 1,000 unemployed / underemployed students over the last six years. The program has transitioned diverse and underserved students into family-sustaining wage IT and cyber careers. We are particularly proud that for BCR Cyber, we've helped to provide these career opportunities to a very diverse population - nearly 70% of our participants have been people of color in an industry that very much needs diversity. To compete across the region and nationally, however, we need to do more and that's why we need this legislation. To grow, attract, and retain cutting edge technologies like cyber, we need programs like the Talent Innovation Fund.

If enacted, this bill would help in the deployment of experiential learning systems like cyber range training simulators throughout Maryland to address the urgent and well-documented needs of Maryland's cyber workforce by serving several thousand students/job seekers per year. The Talent Innovation Fund provides an opportunity to scale programs like the CPAM / EARN ACT model by more than 16x by providing necessary funding to build the necessary infrastructure. The Talent Innovation Fund complements EARN funding by providing funding for infrastructure like cyber ranges. By statute, the EARN program, although very successful in workforce development, does not allow for funding of infrastructure. The proposed Talent Innovation Fund would provide funding for the infrastructure needed to bridge the cybersecurity workforce gap.

BCR Cyber appreciates the committee's consideration of this program. We believe that ensuring funding the Talent Innovation Fund will train workers with in-demand cyber skills and strengthen the cybersecurity workforce in Maryland. We would respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1128.

Sincerely,



Michael N. Spector
President, BCR Cyber