

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 304
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3671 • 301-858-3671
800-492-7122 Ext. 3671
KatieFry.Hester@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Sponsor Testimony In Support of SB724 - State Personnel - Information
Technology and Cybersecurity Qualifications (Maryland State IT Hiring Act)**

February 27th, 2020

Good afternoon Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB724 - the Maryland State IT Hiring Act. Over the interim I had the honor of serving as the chair of the workforce development subgroup of the Attorney General's cybersecurity council, and spent a large amount of my time studying the cybersecurity industry and the workforce development initiatives taking place. In speaking to actors throughout the cybersecurity and IT space, I found that many private sector employers are moving away from strict bachelors-degree requirements as relates to IT and cybersecurity, instead electing to orient their workforces towards the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to fulfill a cybersecurity role. Doing so provides more recruitment flexibility when addressing workforce shortages by facilitating the recruitment of individuals who receive professional IT certifications as opposed to a 4-year undergraduate degree, as well as the upskilling of current personnel to fulfill IT roles.

This bill would require the State to do the same, keeping us on the forefront of cybersecurity practices. If passed, this legislation would require the Secretary of Budget and Management, in consultation with the Secretary of DoIT and the State Chief Information Security Officer, to establish minimum qualifications for IT and cybersecurity positions that emphasize the competencies and certifications of a job applicant over any particular degree requirement.

These minimum qualifications must also be consistent with the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) - Cybersecurity Workforce Framework, a special publication developed by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST). This is a nationally focused resource that categorizes and describes cybersecurity work, and is intended to establish a common lexicon across the

the public, private, and academic sectors. NIST is also required to maintain this special publication with regular updates as the field evolves and changes over time.

As we contemplate the role of professional certifications and forms of education that may serve as alternatives to a traditional 4-year bachelor's degree in the context of the Blueprint for Maryland Future, it seems appropriate to make efforts to facilitate the acceptance of these methods of accreditation in State government. This not only keeps us on the forefront of cybersecurity industry standards, but allows us to more efficiently fulfill the cyber workforce shortage we currently face. In DoIT alone, the only state agency dedicated solely to IT and cybersecurity with 221 regular employees, 54 positions are left unfilled - corresponding to a vacancy rate of 25%. Using a bachelor's degree as the sole or primary proxy for the evaluation of skills in a field as highly technical as IT and cybersecurity is overly restricting and inefficient, especially considering the groundwork the Federal Government has laid in the form of the NICE Cybersecurity Framework.

In the fiscal note accompanying this legislation, you will find a projection of increased state expenditures if state agencies reclassify their IT positions to increase state salaries. It is in no way the intent of this bill to reclassify IT positions and increase salaries or costs to the state. The sole intent of this bill is to provide a set of qualifications that can facilitate alternative educational routes to existing IT positions, and to apply the NICE Cybersecurity Workforce Framework in State agencies, in order to align with national and industry standards.

This bill is a recommendation of the workforce development sub-committee of the Attorney General's cybersecurity council, and is supported by the Chairman of the Cybersecurity Association of Maryland, as well as the Maryland Association of Community Colleges. **I respectfully request a favorable report for SB724.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Carroll Counties