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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

House Bill 235

State Government – Department of Information Technology – Cybersecurity

Cross-file: SB 120

SPONSOR TESTIMONY - SUPPORT

House Health & Government Operations Committee – February 4, 2020

Chairwoman Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

House Bill 235 is designed after a recently passed North Dakota law that provides local government entities with strategic cybersecurity planning support from the State Department of Information Technology. The former Maryland Chief Information Security Officer brought up this proposal at a Cybersecurity Council meeting over the interim, and the body established mostly of cybersecurity experts has endorsed the concept.

In the long run, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, as Benjamin Franklin said when referring to the need for a fire department and standardized equipment. This quote is apt today in this similar context with the need for a public expense to prevent a worse unmitigated situation. Today, we must put out the digital fires within our governmental instruments through coordinated and uniform approaches that mirror best practices and prevent worse outcomes upfront, rather than scrambling on the back end to coordinate a response on the back-foot.

The bill's note does not reflect the language or intent of the bill, which is to merely advise and consent on the upfront strategy to prevent and mitigate cyber disruptions of local government functions. The intent is for the obligation to be on both the local entity and DoIT to coordinate the strategy itself. Implementing and regulating would be in the hands of the entities themselves. DoIT would merely support the design of and sign-off on the plans.

Maryland law requires towns, school districts and counties to prepare for fires and to have adequate fire extinguishers and sprinklers in place to mitigate the foreseeable tragedy, but we don't adequately prepare to confront foreseeable cyber disasters. All levels of our government must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to fight and prevent digital disasters from becoming life threatening dangers. Government owes a duty to its citizens to be able to provide much needed services without interruption from foreseeable circumstances like cyber disruptions.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 235.