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March 10, 2021

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: The Office of the Attorney General

RE: HB 879 – Maryland Emergency Management Agency - Cybersecurity Coordination
and Operations Office - Establishment– **Letter of Information**

The Office of the Attorney General does not have a position on HB 879. The Office, however, is submitting this letter to provide information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 879 establishes and staffs a new Cyber Coordination and Operations Office ("CCOO") within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency ("MEMA") to prepare political subdivisions, school boards, and agencies against cybersecurity attacks. House Bill 879 helps these entities to develop cyber disruption plans, to implement cyber best practices, to coordinate with DoIT on the implementation of the State Master Plan, and to connect these entities with resources in consultation with DoIT. Also, House Bill 879 instructs the CCOO to provide technical assistance to these entities, provide risk assessments, develop score cards and reports on readiness, and include these entities in cyber exercises that MEMA conducts with DoIT, the Guard, and other agencies.

House Bill 879 views cyber events as potentially having the same catastrophic effects as floods, wildfires, or other natural events. The bill will leverage the natural convening power and existing relationships that the MEMA has with other State agencies and with local units of government. The bill will also provide additional resources permitting MEMA to execute this new mission.

House Bill 879 seeks to implement Maryland Cybersecurity Council's ("Council") recommendation to enlarge DoIT's role.¹ The Council also recommended to consider North Dakota Senate Bill No. 2110² as a reference on how Maryland should enlarge DoIT's role with respect to the other branches of State government as well as local governments and the public university system.³ Adopting the Council's recommendation would prepare the legislature, judiciary, and political subdivisions against cybersecurity attacks.

In sum, House Bill 879 provides an active support to prepare against cybersecurity attacks. The bill further requires MEMA to implement best practices in consultation with DoIT, consistent with other ongoing improvements around the country.

cc: Committee Members

¹ See MD. CYBERSECURITY COUNS., MARYLAND CYBERSECURITY COUNCIL ACTIVITIES REPORT 2017 - 2019, 26 (July 1, 2019), <https://www.umgc.edu/documents/upload/maryland-cybersecurity-council-activities-report-2017-2019.pdf>.

² See generally S.B. 2110 (N.D. Jan. 3, 2019), <https://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/66-2019/documents/19-8091-04000.pdf>.

³ See MD. CYBERSECURITY COUNS., *supra* note 1, at 26.