ERIC LUEDTKE
14th Legislative District
Montgomery County

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Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees
Chair, Finance Resources

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY
House Bill 24 - Cybersecurity Scholarship Program – Alterations and Maryland Cybersecurity Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Establishment

Today we live in a world dominated by computer technology. This has allowed us to advance society in ways that Americans a century ago never dreamed. But these advancements have also opened the door to new and ever-evolving threats to our most critical infrastructure and sensitive information. The significance of this threat was highlighted in Maryland most recently in December when a cyber attack on our Department of Health left the public without COVID-19 data for nearly two weeks, just as the omicron variant began surging in our state. As a result, decision-makers around Maryland were left without vital information during this public health crisis.

This was not the first time that a state or local agency was attacked by cyber criminals in Maryland. In 2018, Baltimore City lost access to many services when their servers were hacked and held for ransom. In 2020, Baltimore County had to close schools after a cyber attack on BCPS. In recognition of this ongoing threat, Governor Hogan recently entered the state into a partnership with the NSA. But this won't be enough. And, frankly, the top talent in the cybersecurity field are not working for state and local governments since they could earn better compensation in the private sector.

The Maryland Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship has sought to change this by helping students pay for their cybersecurity education in exchange for working for the state following graduation. This allows the state to access well-trained cybersecurity professionals while further developing our workforce. However, this program is currently overly restrictive. As a result, students are only able to receive the scholarship for 2 years and must attend college full-time, a condition that leaves out the many students who work full-time but have returned to school in search of an opportunity in the cyber field. Once graduated, these cyber professionals are only permitted to work for the state to fulfill their public service obligation while our counties and municipalities are in need of cybersecurity talent. And if a student was unaware of or ineligible for this program while receiving their education, they are left with little incentive to work for state or local government.

House Bill 24 seeks to address these issues by expanding the Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship and creating the Maryland Cybersecurity Loan Assistance Repayment Program. The expansion of the scholarship includes allowing part-time students to receive the

award, allowing all students to receive the award for an additional year, and allowing awardees to fulfill their public service requirement through community colleges and county or municipal governments.

The Maryland Cybersecurity Loan Assistance Repayment Program would incentivize cybersecurity professionals to work for state, county, or municipal governments by providing loan repayments to supplement their compensation. This would allow graduates who were unaware of or ineligible for the Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship while earning their degrees to be eligible for an incentive to protect our critical infrastructure.

Both of these programs aim to keep cybersecurity professionals in Maryland, further develop the workforce, and provide our cyber infrastructure with a much-needed pool of talent. In my view, these programs are essential to ensuring that the critical infrastructure and private information of Marylanders are protected. For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Delegate Eric Luedtke