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Baltimore and Howard Counties

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations
and Health Facilities

Public Health and
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HB1359

State Government - Technology and Science Advisory Commission - Established

March 15, 2022

Chairman McIntosh, Vice-chair Chang, and House Appropriations Committee Colleagues,

HB1359 would establish the Technology and Science Advisory Commission to study advancing technology and make recommendations on applications of technology and science in and by the state. The goal is to lessen Maryland's future need to react to, and remedy, unintended consequences of policies, systems, and actions which, in retrospect, were ill-advised or inadequately informed. The analyses and recommendations the Commission will support more deliberate implementation and administration of procedures, particularly where algorithmic design is used in designing programs, procuring operational tools, and carrying out policy.

There are obvious application benefits to having such a resource available - a think tank, of sorts, drawn from tech and science experts from academia, private, and public sectors, across broad areas of expertise, who are not only engaging in the latest science and technology but also, in some cases, developing it.

As important as it is that Maryland be timely in adaptation of emerging technologies and avoid allowing antiquated systems to undermine efficiencies and effectiveness, it is equally important that we are alert to the dangers of too rapid adaptation, understand the emerging risk associated with specific innovations, and that adequate and appropriately updated oversight, monitoring, and security are also in place. This is especially true with increased use of automated systems and artificial intelligence. Innovators are not known for prioritizing sussing out potentially harmful effects of their innovations. They're focused on the potential benefits. We, on the other hand, cannot afford to so starry-eyed; our responsibilities are greater and there are too much on the line.

In the last several years we've spent significant energy and resources identifying and trying to either mitigate or undo damage caused by biases baked into our operations, which inadvertently and unfairly target, disqualify, or handicap individuals based both on articulated and unspoken presumptions and on the reinforcement of traditionally unquestioned assumptions. On issues as divergent as an inmates' likelihood to reoffend if paroled, to which job candidate should be offered a position, to the appropriateness of the use of facial recognition systems in policing and law enforcement, to the determination of which patients will be offered a particular procedure or therapy, decisions are being made every day in which historic prejudices belie our best efforts to correct the harms of our past.

Recent revelations about how Facebook, as only one example, is actively harming users through its application of algorithms designed to maximize the bottom line, has re-awakened us to the dangers inherent in becoming too comfortable with being inattentive or unquestioning of the science itself. It is important that Maryland determine best to define and apply the principles of responsible AI, take a forward looking approach to incorporation of cutting-edge science and technology, and become more collaborative in how we approach both. **HB1359** is a good way to start and I urge a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Hill'.