

**KATIE FRY HESTER**  
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Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on  
Cybersecurity, Information Technology  
and Biotechnology



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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Sponsor Testimony - SB754 - The Local Cybersecurity Support Act of 2022**

March 3, 2022

Thank you Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee for your consideration of SB754 - The Local Cybersecurity Support Act of 2022 - which leverages state resources to provide financial and technical assistance to local units of governments' efforts to increase their IT and cybersecurity capacity.

As you heard during our January 27th briefing, during the 2021 interim, the Maryland Cybersecurity Council subcommittee studied the threat posed by cybercrime to local governments. The subcommittee included the Maryland Department of Information Technology, The Maryland Department of Emergency Management, the University of Maryland Center for Health & Homeland Security, the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), and the Maryland Municipal League (MML). Unfortunately, the results confirm what we already know: no jurisdiction, regardless of its size, is immune to cyberattacks. In Maryland alone, large jurisdictions like Baltimore County have spent nearly \$8M to recover from attacks against their school systems, and small municipalities like Leonardtown and North Beach have been crippled by ransomware attacks.

Thankfully, our research revealed a number of possible resolutions to this threat, and SB754 is informed by those recommendations:

- First, it leverages the state's resources to codify and fully fund the Cyber Preparedness Unit within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. This Unit is currently entirely funded by a 2-year federal grant and is working in collaboration with the State Chief Information Security Officer to support local government's development of vulnerability assessments and cyber preparedness/response plans. It would also serve as a point of contact for local governments to notify the state and mobilize relevant agencies if they are the victim of a cyberattack.
- Second, it establishes a Local Cybersecurity Support Fund to provide financial assistance for cyber preparedness efforts. This could include upgrading current devices, purchasing new software, or paying for cybersecurity training, but the language has also been amended to provide for increased flexibility to meet our county or municipal needs. This

also ensures that we're able to reduce disparities between larger, wealthy jurisdictions and smaller, low-income jurisdictions. This fund is also intended to serve as a local match for the State & Local Cybersecurity Grant program in the recently passed federal Infrastructure bill.

- Finally, it codifies the forthcoming Information and Analysis Center (ISAC) within the Department of Information Technology and in partnership with UMBC's Institute for Innovative Computing to coordinate and disseminate information on threats, resources, or responses to cybersecurity incidents.

In our digital age, it is not enough for the state to simply protect itself: vulnerabilities at the local level pose just as much a threat to our citizens' data as those at the state level. Our local governments are eager to address these vulnerabilities, but limited funding and staff present a significant obstacle. SB754 provides three distinct solutions to these problems by leveraging the state's resources, and for those reasons, **I respectfully request a favorable report from the committee.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Fry Hester".

Senator Katie Fry Hester  
Howard and Carroll Counties