TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 4
CYBERSECURITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM – ALTERATIONS AND
MARYLAND CYBERSECURITY
LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM – ESTABLISHMENT

KEVIN RITTIE
FOUNDER AND CEO, RevelationSCS

POSITION: SUPPORT

FEBRUARY 9, 2022

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 4 this afternoon.

I am a technologist and businessman that has been involved in the development and delivery of products and solutions to the energy and transportation sector of the US and many other countries around the world. Cybersecurity is a critical component of this class of systems and solutions and underpins much of the work that we do. In a post-9/11 world, I witnessed industry move from an open system perspective where data sharing and availability was paramount, back to a closed and isolated system mindset. However, the reasons for this information sharing and availability, including improved use of information, optimized processes, increased efficiencies, were still key objectives for these industries in order to improve service and control costs. As such, cybersecurity became a critical component to these industries, along with other sectors, including state and local governments, education systems, hospitals, and in actuality, everyone in a business became at risk. We saw the rise of many threats including worms, trojans, state-sponsored attacks, and most recently, ransomware. Criminal software was creating crises in many segments, putting everyday citizens at risk.

This legislation is important as it creates an incentive for students to consider the field of cybersecurity as a long-term career option. It is recognizing a two-fold need, the first being that the cybersecurity field has been acknowledged as being critically understaffed, and two, that the Maryland State government and related municipalities and agencies are suffering from the lack of professionals in this field. As a software and cybersecurity professional, it is important to note that cybersecurity is critical not only in the protection of IT infrastructure or responding to incidents, it is also a component to be incorporated into the systems and solutions being developed, integrated, or purchased by the State and used to deliver services to Maryland citizens. The fact that this bill recognizes both the scholarship need across the financial and institutional spectrum as well as the fact that many students graduate with significant debt, is important in gaining my advocacy. As a part-time adjunct professor—teaching cybersecurity at the collegiate level at a private Maryland university—and as a parent that has put three children through both private and public universities, I have witnessed firsthand the financial burden with which so many students and families struggle every day. The proposed program extensions offer students an opportunity to apply their skills in a critical area of technology, developing and improving their skills in

practical applications, all while enabling the State to hire bright and up-and-coming cybersecurity professionals for multi-year commitments. This latter is a huge benefit to the State as these new employees are incentivized to stay for a period beyond just training, enabling the State to retain their experience and improve the cybersecurity posture of the State. Furthermore, I appreciate that people that pursue technical certificates are also included in this program. By doing so, the State will benefit from not only a larger and potentially better-skilled pool of employees but may also have a higher retention rate beyond the payback periods—a win-win for both employees and State.

As such, I fully support this proposed bill and believe that it would benefit students, families, the State, regional agencies, and the Maryland citizenry by providing a means of leveraging increased cyber talent, at a reasonable cost, which will improve the cybersecurity posture of Maryland's critical IT infrastructure.

I urge a favorable report. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.