

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 754**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CYBERSECURITY - COORDINATION AND OPERATIONS (LOCAL CYBERSECURITY SUPPORT ACT OF 2022)**

**EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (EHE) COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 3, 2022**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 754.

My name is Ben Yelin, and I am the Program Director for Public Policy & External Affairs at the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security, and an adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. This past year, I had the honor of serving as the co-chair of the Maryland Cybersecurity Council's ad hoc committee on State and Local Cybersecurity. We undertook a comprehensive study during the interim period to look at key issues in cybersecurity governance, state agency cybersecurity, and the cybersecurity posture of units of local government. The members of the ad hoc committee were proud to release this report at the end of last year and are grateful that many of its recommendations are being reflected in pieces of legislation before us today.

We are all familiar with the damage wrought by cyber-attacks on our local governments, such as the ransomware attack in Baltimore City that cost over \$18 million in system restoration and delayed or lost revenue, the 2021 attack on the Baltimore County school system and the Kaseya cyberattack that affected some of our smaller jurisdictions, including Leonardtown, MD. To better prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from cyber-attacks in the future, Maryland needs to leverage the expertise of our state agencies to coordinate preparedness and response activities, and to provide financial assistance where needed.

Our study highlighted some of the vulnerabilities and preparedness gaps at the local level. Though counties, school districts, local emergency management departments and other units of local governments are making good faith efforts to improve their cybersecurity posture, a large portion of these agencies have still not completed vulnerability assessments, do not have consequence management plans, and do not have adequate staffing resources to address the current threat landscape. We heard in focus groups with representatives from County IT departments and representatives from local school districts that they could use the state's resources, particularly the Maryland Department of Emergency Management's expertise in resource coordination and a coalescer of preparedness materials, to improve its cyber readiness.

If passed, Senate Bill 754, as amended, would accomplish these goals. First, the bill would codify the existing Cyber Preparedness Unit in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. This unit would be tasked with supporting local governments in its conducting vulnerabilities and risk assessments, maintain a database of cybersecurity resources, help units of local government adopt best preparedness practices as established by the State Chief Information Security Officer (SCISO), and support localities in obtaining resources needed for other preparedness activities. In addition, the bill establishes the local cybersecurity support fund, which would provide financial assistance to local

governments to enhance preparedness and to assist these units in obtaining federal cybersecurity resources.

I want to note that we worked closely with the Maryland Association of Counties and the Maryland Municipal League in crafting these recommendations. I am pleased that both organizations have expressed support for this bill with some amendments. We are fully supportive of these amendments, particularly removing the requirement that units of local governments must meet certain minimum security standards to obtain funds under the local cybersecurity fund. I am also pleased that in coordination with MDEM, and other stakeholders, we have suggested amendments to match the bill more closely to the agencies' capabilities and preexisting efforts.

I thank you for your attention today and your commitment to protect all Marylanders from the risks posed by cyber-attacks. I respectfully urge a favorable report, with amendments, on SB754.