

KATIE FRY HESTER
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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

Testimony in Support of SB753 - The Cyber Workforce Accelerator (CWA) Act of 2022

3/17/2021

Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for your consideration of SB753 - The Cyber Workforce Accelerator Act of 2022 - which will improve and expand our state's workforce development initiatives for the cybersecurity sector.

Our state leads the nation when it comes to cybersecurity innovation. We are home to the National Security Agency, the Department of Defense's Cyber Crime Center, and the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics lab, among other rapidly growing public and private cybersecurity employers.

However, our state still has 21,000 open jobs in this field, and with a higher unemployment rate than nationwide, growing the pool of available workers to fill the needs of this industry will be critical to our state's future economic growth. When I was first asked to chair the Maryland Cybersecurity Council Subcommittee on Workforce Development, I requested a list of all the state programs we have related to workforce development in this industry. The answer is: we have a lot! Some are better than others, but what is missing, colleagues, is something to tie all of these programs together - something to make sure they're supporting a talent pipeline toward jobs that are open, that programs are working effectively, and that students know about them.

SB753 achieves this goal by creating a Cyber Workforce Accelerator to – as the name implies – accelerate the speed of our workforce development. As you will hear shortly, the accelerator will leverage UMBC's experience in this space to work with industry to identify specific, real-time needs of industry. Based on this work, the Accelerator can refine current cyber workforce programs and to develop new programs to fill any gaps.

The existing programs that will receive additional funding with this legislation are:

- 1.) The Maryland Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Programs for cybersecurity;

- 2.) The Cyber Warrior Diversity Program, and
- 3.) The current Maryland Technology Internship Program

The new programs created by this bill are:

- 4.) A teacher externship program - which will enable teachers to have paid externships in cybersecurity industry for professional development
- 5.) A K-12 Cybersecurity Education Grant Program - which provides funding for any LEA that wants to adopt a course or class on cybersecurity and needs funds for curriculum development, and
- 6.) A new Cybersecurity Workforce Accelerator Fund - which will support innovative approaches to meet cyber workforce that are not being covered in any of the areas already mentioned.

Finally, I want to mention that Maryland has been chosen as one of the finalists to apply for an American Rescue Plan EDA Grant. Any money we put into these cybersecurity programs can serve as a local match for federal funds and I'd be happy to send committee members a project overview.

In closing, by establishing the Cyber Workforce Accelerator to strategically manage the connection between industry and our state workforce programs, we can increase the impact and effectiveness and make more progress towards achieving our state's short- and long-term goals. **For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB753.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Carroll and Howard Counties