



March 9, 2023

The Honorable C. T. Wilson
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

The Honorable Brian M. Crosby
Vice Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

Re: Support of House Bill 969 (Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity Act of 2023)

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The Alliance for Digital Innovation (ADI) is a nonpartisan alliance of technology companies focused on accelerating change in the public sector through the adoption of commercial technology. Our members are some of the most prominent and innovative technology firms in the nation, including many that already proudly serve the State of Maryland.

ADI supports House Bill 969 and strongly encourages you to advance this legislation from your committee to the House floor.

State and local government networks and systems face increasingly sophisticated cybersecurity threats every day. In recent years, we have seen cyberattacks that have imperiled election systems, shut down entire school districts, and crippled law enforcement networks. Ransomware attacks in particular have increased greatly over the past few years, especially against local governments, school districts, and critical infrastructure. State and local governments must have sufficient resources to protect against malicious activity and prepare for recovery from a cyberattack.

House Bill 969 is an important step towards a “whole of state” approach to cybersecurity in Maryland. Across the country, state governments are increasingly realizing that cybersecurity means more than simply securing state systems. In the cybersecurity realm, states are only as secure as their weakest link, and it’s vital that leaders develop strong cyber policies that include not just state and local government agencies, but also core public services such as energy and water utilities. These are the critical public services upon which the people of Maryland depend, and they must be protected.

Recognizing this risk, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a memorandum to states on March 3, 2023, directing them to include cybersecurity when they conduct periodic audits of water systems. House Bill 969 would empower public utilities to comply with this new federal requirement and protect drinking water supplies in Maryland.

A “zero trust” architecture represents current best practices in cybersecurity. Under previous cybersecurity models, we used to assume that because someone had access to an internal network, they could be trusted.

This system of “trust but verify” was like a moat around a castle, and once you were inside, you were a trusted person. This is one of the main reasons why you see so many news stories about cyberattacks that began with phishing emails – where a bad actor tricks someone into disclosing their password to gain access to a network.

Zero trust flips that on its head by assuming that every user is a threat, no matter their location. Instead of “trust but verify,” zero trust means “ALWAYS verify and THEN trust.” In such an environment, a criminal who has obtained an employee’s password will be unable to cause as much damage and probably wouldn’t be able to access the network at all. Zero trust cybersecurity brings secure cloud strategies that are critical for today’s distributed workforce. Maryland’s public service companies will be better positioned to store, manage, and share data while reducing the likelihood that a criminal can disrupt critical services or steal citizen data.

Lastly, many government budgets lack the funding necessary to secure their critical infrastructure. By promoting a secure cloud strategy based upon zero trust principles, Maryland’s public service companies would have the flexibility and reliability of a secured network, making it more efficient for their budgets and in turn, their rate payers.

For all of these reasons, ADI urges you to vote in favor of House Bill 969.

Thank you for your attention to this effort to enhance cybersecurity in the State of Maryland’s critical infrastructure. Please consider ADI as a resource as the committee deliberates on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Dan Wolf
Director of State Programs
Alliance for Digital Innovation