



SB 698 - Consumer Protection - Online and Biometric Data Privacy
Senate Finance Committee
March 8th, 2023
SUPPORT

Chairman Griffith, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 698. This bill will increase consumer protections around biometric data and create the Task Force to Study Online Data Privacy.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

The ability for consumers to regulate how businesses collect and store their personal data and use their biometric data is a right that all Marylanders should have. Consumer data is not only an issue of privacy but also an issue of security. Data breaches are disturbingly common incidents that impact consumers across Maryland. **In 2022, Maryland had over 1000 instances of data breaches.**¹ There are already several large data brokers who collect volumes of information on consumers and sell the information for a fee.

Biometric data consists of a person's unique physical characteristics like fingerprints, palmprints, voiceprints, facial, or retinal measurements. It is increasingly becoming more popular to use biometrics in law enforcement, healthcare, and commercial industries. As the use of this data becomes more popular, the risk to consumers of having their personal biometric data breached is also increased. This can result in consumers becoming victims of identity fraud.

SB 698 will also establish the Task Force to Study Online Data Privacy. This task force would study how data is shared between health and social care providers, ways to protect children, and how to reduce bias in using biometric, and other topics concerning online data privacy.

Consumers must be very careful about who has access to their personal information. CASH supports legislation that will ensure Maryland remains a national leader in consumer protection policy.

For these reasons, we encourage a favorable report on SB 698.

¹ <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/IdentityTheft/breachnotices.aspx>