



Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: *Senate Bill 692: Cybersecurity - Workgroup to Study Data Security – Establishment – SUPPORT*

February 29, 2024

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members:

On behalf of Varonis Systems, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support to Senate Bill 692, entitled: *Cybersecurity - Workgroup to Study Data Security*.

What is data security and why is important for our state government? First, data security is a series of processes and practices designed to protect the information stored within critical information technology (IT) ecosystems from unauthorized access for both private sector companies and organizations, as well, as our state and local government infrastructures. Effective data security adopts a set of controls, applications, and techniques that identify the importance of various datasets, applies controls to ensure least-privilege access and monitoring for threats.

Data security is critical to public and private sector organizations for a variety of reasons. While there is not a “silver bullet” for stopping cyber-attacks, data security is one of most critical aspects of a mature cybersecurity program for evaluating threats and reducing the risk associated with data storage and handling. Data security isn’t simply a one-off project, it must be viewed as an ongoing endeavor and should be tackled from all angles. By understanding what data security is — and the measures you can take to improve it — you’ll minimize the risk of ransomware attacks, costly data breaches, or unintended data loss.

For Maryland, we have witnessed multiple cyber/ data incidents, over the years, that have crippled our state and local government and educational systems resulting in substantial costs and compromised data. In 2022, state lawmakers enacted several critical pieces of legislation that significantly advanced the state’s cybersecurity activities for many years. While the State continues to make laudable progress in advancing legislative policy on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, similar discussions or actions surrounding data security have been noticeably underwhelming.

With the series of unfortunate examples of attacks in cyberattacks in the State within that last five to ten years, Maryland can’t afford to delay these conversations surrounding data security any longer. Moreover, as the State continues its multi-million-dollar investments into modernizing its IT legacy systems, how is Maryland’s departments/agencies ensuring that this sensitive data is secured

through this migration progress and beyond? This is why the enactment of Senate Bill 692 is so critical for Maryland's future.

As written, Senate Bill 692 establishes a workgroup to study data security and data protection standards, identify existing standards that would best be assimilated by State agencies, and develop recommendations on and assess certain fiscal impacts. The workgroup will be required to submit an interim report by December 1, 2024, and a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 30, 2025.

Discussions surrounding data security maybe occurring internally within certain state departments. However, the enactment of this legislation will bring an inclusive cross-section of both private industry stakeholders, along with various state and local representatives, to the conversation "table" to fully examine this topic and how best to guide the state to develop (and adopt) security standards throughout its departments/agencies.

It is for these reasons that Varonis supports the passage of Senate Bill 692 and urges this committee to give this legislation a FAVORABLE report.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,



Jason Bonasera
Varonis Systems, Inc.