

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SB 980 (EDUCATION - COMPUTER SCIENCE - CONTENT STANDARDS AND
REQUIREMENTS)

DR. MELISSA DARK

POSITION: SUPPORT

MARCH 6, 2024

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the committee. I am Dr. Melissa Dark, Founder and CEO of DARK Enterprises, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to developing, supporting, and stewarding excellent cybersecurity education at the secondary level. Examples of our work in cybersecurity education include teachcyber.org, teachcyber.org/NCTA, and cybersupply.org. I urge a favorable report on SB 980.

I have worked in cybersecurity education for 25 years. One of the greatest challenges our nation faces is producing a robust cybersecurity workforce. To fill the national cybersecurity workforce shortage, the U.S. needs 1 in every 32 eligible¹ workers (those of working age to specialize and work in cybersecurity). The need in Maryland is even greater. Maryland needs 1 in every 12 eligible workers in Maryland to specialize and work in cybersecurity.

One way to fill this workforce shortage is to grow your talent pool starting earlier. This is what SB 980 will do. It will help Maryland get much-needed high quality cybersecurity education into your public schools to grow its supply of cybersecurity talent.

Let me share the following facts based on research that my organization conducts (cybersupply.org).

- Only 18% of public high schools in Maryland are positioned to offer a cybersecurity course (cybersupply.org). This means the school has a qualified teacher to teach the course, curriculum, labs, etc.

¹ The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the eligible labor force to include persons 16 years of age and older residing in the 50 States and the District of Columbia who are not inmates of institutions (for example, penal and mental facilities, homes for the aged), and who are not on active duty in the Armed Forces.

- In comparison, your neighboring state of Virginia offers cybersecurity in 61% of Virginia public high schools.
- While 18% of your schools offer cybersecurity, given seat limits and schedule constraints, fewer than 3.6% of Maryland high school students can actually enroll in a cybersecurity course compared to 14% in Virginia.

The net effect is that Maryland high school students have ¼ the access to quality cybersecurity education when compared to Virginia, another state with high worker demand in cybersecurity. SB 980 can potentially to bring opportunities to Maryland high school students to set them on the pathway for high tech, high wage, high demand jobs in cybersecurity and to meet cybersecurity workforce demands.

Again, I urge a favorable report on SB 980.

Thank you.