



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 1087: Maryland Artificial Intelligence Advisory & Oversight Committee – SUPPORT***

**February 22, 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 with amendments to Senate Bill 1087, entitled: *Maryland Artificial Intelligence Advisory & Oversight Committee*.

As written, Senate Bill 1087 would establish the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Advisory & Oversight Committee. The commission, made up of state lawmakers, the Department of Information Technology (DoIT), public education, and private sector representatives, would be tasked with guiding the State in growing, developing, using, and diversifying artificial intelligence (AI). The commission would also be responsible for ensuring that AI-related training programs and contract awards would be diverse. In addition, the commission would make recommendations on the use of AI by diverse groups in the State of Maryland.

Artificial intelligence dates to the 1960s with the creation of the first AI chatbot, ELIZA, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum. However, since the introduction of ChatGPT in late 2022, AI has taken the world by storm. AI has given the world access to a powerful tool and the technology will continue to evolve in the years to come.

As new AI tools are released, companies and state governments must educate their teams on how to properly use them and stay aware of the positive aspects and negative concerns as they are discovered. Understanding the benefits and risks involved with AI, will require guidance and education to from a cross-section of experts in both the private and public sectors, statewide. The establishment of this new commission is one of the first legislative policy steps forward to ensuring that the various AI tools available to the State are being properly used, while also advancing racial diversity in Maryland's procurement selection process and training programs.

Varonis Systems is an international cyber and data security company - we are extremely aware of the many advantages that AI offers as well as the challenges and risks associated with the tool. AI introduces several security risks that need to be carefully considered when implementing and using the technology. A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting, entitled, "*Maximizing Business Potential With Generative AI: The Path to Transformation*" stated that with 64% of respondents reporting they don't know how to evaluate the security of generative AI tools.

Should this new commission be created through the enactment of Senate Bill 1087, Varonis strongly recommends that guidance pertaining to security awareness and protections are part of those AI discussions and strategies. For Varonis, we stand ready to assist this commission and the State as AI becomes more integrated into our state infrastructure, school systems, and daily use.

It is for these reasons that Varonis supports the passage of Senate Bill 1087 and urges this committee to give this legislation a FAVORABLE report.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,



Jason Bonasera  
Varonis Systems, Inc.