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Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

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Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology

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Testimony in Support of SB0979: Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines and Pilot Program

March 6, 2024

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 979. This bill is a significant step toward supporting our public school system in keeping pace with the changing landscape of artificial intelligence (AI). It recognizes the critical importance of integrating AI responsibly into our educational framework and the day-to-day operations of our schools.

During the interim, the Joint Committee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Biotechnology took a look at the applications of AI in different slices of society, one of which was education. I'd like to refer you to the two-pager [1] attached to my testimony, developed by the Morgan State Center for Equitable AI and Machine Learning Systems, which outlines some of the opportunities and risks of using AI in the classroom and some really good questions we should be asking.

- OPPORTUNITIES
    - AI can tailor educational content to individual students, accommodating different learning styles, paces, and abilities. *How can we ensure that AI systems provide equitable and effective personalized learning for all students?*
    - AI can automate administrative tasks, provide 24/7 tutoring, and support remote or disadvantaged students. *How can AI be used to bridge educational gaps and make education more accessible?*
    - AI can analyze large datasets to identify trends and areas for improvement in educational systems. *How can AI-driven analytics inform education policy and decision-making?*

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[1] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vUeyOeT8vDRz08lILfFGoK97dvWPzwpH/view?usp=share_link

- ○ AI can assist educators in creating customized lesson plans, grading, and identifying students who may need extra help. *How can AI enhance teacher effectiveness and professional development?*
- RISKS
  - ○ AI algorithms can inherit biases from training data, leading to discrimination or reinforcing existing inequalities. *How can we ensure AI systems in education are fair and unbiased?*
  - ○ The use of AI in education involves collecting and analyzing sensitive student data. *How can we protect students' privacy and data security?*
  - ○ An overreliance on AI technology might reduce teacher-student interactions and limit critical thinking development. *How can we strike a balance between technology and traditional teaching methods?*
  - ○ The adoption of AI in education may raise concerns about potential job displacement for educators. *How can we ensure that AI enhances, rather than replaces, the role of teachers?*

SB 979 provides a framework for the State to begin to address these opportunities and risks and is an important first step in addressing the use of AI in education. Broadly, the bill does this by establishing definitions, collaboration, and procurement:

- Definitions:
  - ○ Articulates definitions for artificial intelligence and personal information
- Collaboration:
  - ○ Establishes collaboration on best practices between MSDE, the Governor's Executive Council's Artificial Intelligence Subcabinet, and Local Boards of Education:
    - ■ The Department of Education, in consultation with the Artificial Intelligence Subcabinet, develops state guidelines, standards, and best practices in alignment with the Federal guidelines on artificial intelligence.
    - ■ Each county board will designate a point of contact for artificial intelligence.
    - ■ It requires the department to coordinate with the CTE committee and the CTE Skills Standards Advisory Committee on the integration of AI into Maryland's College Career and Readiness (CCR) standards.
    - ■ Requires the department to include AI-inclusive professional development for teachers.
- Procurement:
  - ○ Establishes procedures for the development, procurement, and implementation of AI systems by a local board that will ensure that they will not:
    - ■ Result in any unlawful discrimination;

- ■ Have an unlawful, disparate impact on an individual or group
- ■ Have a negative impact on the health, safety, or well-being of an individual or group
- ■ Do not collect personal information from a student, group of students, principal, teacher, or staff member without the written approval of DOIT.

For the record, I am submitting an amendment that makes a few technical changes to the bill. Specifically, these amendments will tweak the definition of AI, strike the definition of impact assessment, and add a requirement for progress and a final report.

Senate Bill 979 embodies a forward-thinking and thorough strategy for incorporating AI into Maryland's K–12 education. By welcoming contributions from various stakeholders, setting explicit standards, promoting cooperation, and managing risks, this legislation establishes Maryland as a pioneer in harnessing AI to improve educational achievements.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 979.

Sincerely,

Katie Fry Hester

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Montgomery Counties
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology & Biotechnology