



March 13, 2024

Senator Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland

Senate Bill 997- Health - Vital Records - Electronic Filing and Storage -  
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chairwoman Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier and Members of the Senate  
Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed amendment to  
Senate Bill 997 that would update and enhance the capabilities of the State of  
Maryland Vital Records System (VRS).

Netsmart is a leading provider of healthcare information technology solutions and  
services to states, counties and municipal agencies, and community-based  
providers nationwide. We are the technology and knowledge partner of choice for 44  
states and more than 200 counties for vital records, behavioral health, I/DD,  
addiction treatment, social services, senior living, veteran's homes and public health  
technologies. Our more than 400 clients in Maryland include the Maryland  
Department of Health, where we are implementing Netsmart's electronic health  
record (EHR) system to support the MDH EHR modernization initiative for  
State-operated healthcare facilities.

We also provide VRS technology to the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of  
Vital Statistics; the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Office of Vital  
Records; the Illinois DPH Division of Vital Records; and several other state systems.

Transitioning the Maryland VRS to a single database will provide users with  
simplified, faster access and easier navigation to the information they are looking for.  
It will also provide a defined path for increasing the number of record types in the  
system as needed.

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A single database and updated technology also:

- Simplifies the entry, validation, registration and retrieval of vital records
- Improves the timeliness and accuracy of information in the VRS database
- Automates processes with hospitals and other VRS partners through electronic data exchange
- Prevents errors by reducing or eliminating the need to key-in or re-enter information into the system manually
- Simplifies integration with law enforcement...a rapidly-emerging VRS growth requirement
- Taps the full potential of the VRS workforce and enhances job satisfaction

On a larger level, an enhanced VRS should be a highly scalable, holistic system with interoperability with NCHS and support for data exchange between federal, state and local agencies (e.g., NCHS, SSA, CDC, DMV), using a variety of secure standards, such as HL7 and FHIR. It should also support federal agency reporting requirements.

The future of vital records needs to be interoperable and flexible, enabling greater connectivity and less time and effort for users. The amendment to Senate Bill 997 retains the foundation of the current statute while making an impactful transformation for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on value of the amendment, which includes consideration of many of the above points. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

*Merrill Johnson*

Merrill Johnson (Mar 12, 2024 10:13 MDT)

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# Netsmart written testimony - MD VRS amendments

Final Audit Report

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