

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 304
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3671 • 301-858-3671
800-492-7122 Ext. 3671
KatieFry.Hester@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB907 - Cybersecurity - Standards, Compliance, and Audits - Alterations

March 5, 2025

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

Thank you for your consideration of **SB907**, which strengthens cybersecurity protections for Maryland's public schools, ensuring they have the tools and resources necessary to prevent cyberattacks and comply with state security standards.

Cyberattacks on schools are **not just an IT issue**—they pose a **direct threat** to students, educators, and the integrity of our education system. Schools store vast amounts of sensitive personal data, including Social Security numbers, medical records, and financial information, making them prime targets for cybercriminals. A single cyberattack can **disrupt learning for weeks, expose students and staff to identity theft, and cost millions in recovery efforts**. Research shows that **U.S. schools lose an average of \$550,000 per day of downtime** due to ransomware attacks, with **total recovery costs reaching millions of dollars**.¹

The risks are real and growing. In August 2023, Prince George's County Public Schools fell victim to a cyberattack that compromised approximately 4,500 district user accounts, primarily those of staff members.² In 2020, a ransomware attack on Baltimore County Public Schools shut down virtual learning and required \$9.7 million in recovery efforts.³ Alarming, only 14% of schools currently require cybersecurity awareness training, leaving them highly vulnerable to phishing and other cyber attacks.⁴

¹ <https://www.comparitech.com/blog/information-security/school-ransomware-attacks/>

² <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/education/prince-georges-county-public-schools-cyberattack/65-55fb0ef7-1a50-4e8c-aa3d-995ef39cfef0>

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<https://www.wmar2news.com/news/local-news-in-maryland/investigative-report-reveals-what-led-to-2020-cyberattack-on-baltimore-county-public-schools>

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https://www.route-fifty.com/cybersecurity/2025/01/parents-think-schools-cybersecurity-stronger-reality-report-says/401916/?oref=rf-today-nl&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Route%20Fifty%20Today:%20January%208%2C%202025&utm_term=newsletter_rf_today

To bolster school cybersecurity and prevent future attacks, SB 907 establishes key standards for local education agencies (LEAs). Specifically, the bill:

1) Strengthens Cybersecurity Staffing & Investments

- a) Requires LEAs to report IT staff expenditures, broken down by full-time employees, vendor-supported staff, and dedicated cybersecurity professionals.
- b) Mandates that each county board provide sufficient cybersecurity staffing, as determined by the State Chief Information Officer.
- c) Directs DoIT to assign at least three Information Security Officers to assist LEAs
- d) Recognizes cybersecurity expenses as an allowable per-pupil cost under education technology funding in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- e) Allows school systems to share cybersecurity services, contractors, and regional support to maximize resources.
- f) Establishes annual tracking and reporting of cybersecurity expenditures, starting August 15, 2025.

2) Ensures Compliance with State Cybersecurity Standards

- a) Requires all LEAs to comply with and certify to state minimum cybersecurity standards by 2026.
- b) Directs the Office of Security Management within DoIT to annually review and update state minimum cybersecurity standards to keep pace with evolving threats.
- c) Mandates that all LEAs conduct cybersecurity maturity assessments every two years to evaluate preparedness and resilience.

This legislation was **developed in collaboration with chief information officers** from school systems across Maryland, who have emphasized the **urgent need for stronger cybersecurity protections**. By setting clear standards, increasing compliance, and prioritizing investment in cybersecurity, **SB 907 will help safeguard Maryland's schools, protect sensitive data, and prevent costly cyberattacks before they happen.**

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 907.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Montgomery Counties