TO: The Honorable Senator Brian Feldman
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Maryland K12 Technology Leadership Forum

RE: Senate Bill 907 – Cybersecurity, Standards, Compliance, and Audits – Alterations

DATE: March 3, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Maryland K12 Technology Leadership Forum strongly supports Senate Bill 907, introduced by Senator Hester, which seeks to enhance cybersecurity standards, compliance, and audits within Maryland's local school systems. As cyber threats continue to evolve, it is crucial to strengthen our state's cybersecurity infrastructure, ensuring the protection of sensitive data and safeguarding students, teachers, and staff from cyberattacks.

Cybercriminals are increasingly targeting school systems nationwide, employing ever-changing tactics to breach security defenses. Maryland has not been immune to these attacks. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have suffered two major ransomware incidents, multiple third-party vendor breaches affecting staff and student data, and other cyber incidents that required extensive mitigation efforts. These attacks have cost Maryland over 10 million dollars in recovery expenses, disrupted instructional time, and eroded public confidence in our school systems. Most concerning is the exposure of confidential staff and student data, which poses significant risks.

LEAs have made considerable progress in enhancing their cybersecurity capabilities through knowledge-building, partnerships, and proactive defense measures. However, many districts still lack sufficient staffing and resources to meet the increasing cybersecurity demands. Often, cybersecurity responsibilities are assigned to personnel who already have multiple duties, stretching their capacity to effectively safeguard school systems. Despite being proactive, districts must allocate limited funds across numerous competing priorities, making it challenging to maintain strong cybersecurity defenses.

Senate Bill 907 addresses these critical needs by requiring local school systems to:

- Comply with and certify adherence to the State's minimum cybersecurity standards.
- Conduct a cybersecurity maturity assessment every two years.
- Report on cybersecurity expenditures and staffing to ensure adequate protection.
- Receive assistance from dedicated information security officers to support compliance and remediation efforts.

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- Align legislative audits with the Department of Information Technology's State Minimum Cybersecurity Standards, reducing redundant audits and administrative burdens.

Technology audits are necessary tools for strengthening cybersecurity measures, but they are often time- and resource-intensive. This bill seeks to streamline the auditing process by ensuring all technology audits adhere to consistent standards. By establishing uniform criteria, school districts can avoid multiple redundant audits within the same fiscal year, reducing strain on limited resources.

Additionally, the bill would allow districts to use targeted per-pupil foundation funding for cybersecurity by expanding the list of associated costs to include cybersecurity measures and removing the prioritization of digital devices. This provision would provide schools with the flexibility needed to invest in robust cybersecurity staffing and defenses while maintaining other essential educational initiatives.

Accordingly, the MD K12 Technology Leadership Forum respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB 907.