

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 597

Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 11, 2026

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 597. I am Dr. Kollin Napier, Director of the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. MAIN is Mississippi's coordinated statewide artificial intelligence (AI) initiative and the first of its kind in the nation. Since 2023, it has united all public higher education institutions, K-12 systems, state and local government agencies, and industry partners across Mississippi around a single, coordinated strategy to make learning more affordable, accessible, and aligned with workforce demand.

SB 597 is modeled in significant part on the MAIN framework, and Maryland is poised to replicate and build upon our proven results. The bill's Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership (new § 12-124) creates exactly the "single nexus" we established in Mississippi: connecting stakeholders, preventing fragmentation, scaling AI initiatives, leveraging federal/state/industry funding, and establishing Maryland Technology Extension Hubs. In our current development of a physical hub and the master vision to have multiple hubs around the state, these hubs will serve as single points of contact for small businesses and learners, deliver no-cost AI skills training (including cloud-based access to university computing power), and partner with community colleges, employers, and local workforce boards. These are the precise duties outlined in your bill.

The Artificial Intelligence Incubation Lab (§ 12-125) mirrors our AI Innovation Hub with the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services and Amazon Web Services (AWS): it accelerates responsible AI adoption in state agencies through prototypes, proofs-of-concept, faculty matching, and risk management while the Maryland Department of Information Technology provides policy guidance and funding support. The Center for Equitable Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Systems at Morgan State University (§ 14-111) will serve the same statewide research and coordination role we achieve through MAIN's applied ethics and equity focus. Expanding the Cyber Warrior Diversity Program to include AI training and renaming the scholarship the Emerging Technology Public Service Scholarship Program (§§ 18-

3501 et seq.) directly extends the workforce pathways we are building for high-paying AI and cybersecurity careers.

In Mississippi, this coordinated model is delivering measurable success: a single statewide AI curriculum delivered online at no cost (preventing duplication across 15+ institutions), stackable micro-credentials for working adults, embedded AI/data literacy across general education and career programs, and pipelines into manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and defense that we are establishing. We are actively working to address the enrollment cliff, shorten time-to-credential, lower per-student costs, and align education with industry needs. These actions match precisely the economic competitiveness goals stated in SB 597's preamble and aligned with the federal AI Action Plan.

The MAIN model works because it treats AI as a public-good infrastructure: shared resources reduce waste, collaboration unlocks scale, and governance ensures responsible, equitable use. SB 597 institutionalizes these same principles in Maryland. I urge the Committee to pass this forward-looking legislation. Maryland will emerge as a national leader in responsible AI workforce development and innovation.

Thank you. I am happy to answer questions and stand ready to assist Maryland's implementation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kollin Napier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Kollin R. Napier

Director, Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN)

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

For more information: <https://mainms.org/>