



THE MARYLAND GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

January 6, 2021

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, Co-chair
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Co-chair
Members of the Legislative Policy Committee

Members of the Committee:

The Joint Committee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology (IT), and Biotechnology respectfully submits this summary report of its 2020 interim activities. The joint committee held three meetings during the 2020 interim primarily focused on cybersecurity and government information technology modernization.

At the first meeting on July 14, the joint committee heard from the following speakers.

- The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) discussed issues related to keeping IT systems safe during the COVID-19 pandemic (particularly with remote work) and the problem many states are facing with legacy systems and corresponding technical debt. NASCIO advised that many states are moving away from owning IT systems and moving towards procuring hardware as a service (such as buying server space through the Cloud) and software as a service (SaaS).
- The Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) discussed the emergency it faced as the COVID-19 pandemic began in the middle of the implementation of the BEACON-One Stop application system, and the actions it took to ensure that Maryland citizens received timely unemployment insurance payments. MDL acknowledged that there were still issues to address and assured the joint committee that it was working to resolve them.
- Representatives from two private sector companies, NTT DATA and Edwards Performance Solutions, discussed IT modernization strategies that could be implemented by the State and related best practices. Both emphasized the importance of planning and communicating with staff, clients, and the general public as upgrades, improvements, and changes are made.

- The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) discussed its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its activities related to updating the State's aging and legacy IT systems. DoIT emphasized that the State is moving toward cloud services, such as the SaaS model, to update the State's aging IT infrastructure.
- The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) discussed the success of the MDThink cloud-based platform that allows multiple State agencies to share and manage data in a secure manner.

At the second meeting on October 28, the joint committee heard from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and DoIT.

- CISA described the various assessments they offer at no charge to State and local governments. Broadly, the assessments are designed to evaluate an entity's cybersecurity strengths and weaknesses. CISA reports that it has conducted evaluations for many other states, local governments, and private critical infrastructure systems. After the evaluation is concluded, CISA offers suggestions for improvement and will assist the entity in addressing any problems and issues discovered, if the entity requests it.
- DoIT briefly discussed its updated Statewide Information Technology (IT) Master Plan and, at the request of the joint committee, agreed to work with CISA to use some of its services and evaluations to assess State agencies.
- The joint committee also briefly discussed ideas for cybersecurity and information technology legislation for the upcoming 2021 legislative session.

At its final meeting on December 11, the joint committee discussed and voted on committee sponsored legislation for the upcoming 2021 legislative session based on the lessons learned and information provided at the first two meetings. The joint committee voted to either sponsor or support eight pieces of legislation pertaining primarily to cybersecurity, IT modernization, and/or broadband, including:

- cybersecurity training for State and local government employees;
- the reporting of digital education vendors and tools used by local school systems to the Maryland State Department of Education;
- the establishment of a Cybersecurity Coordination and Operations Office within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency;
- the development and implementation of a cyber safety guide and training course to be used in public schools to teach students, parents, and school employees about cybersecurity best practices and responsible and safe Internet use;

- the reporting, by DoIT, of State agency vacant IT positions, IT budgets, cybersecurity and modernization initiatives, and modernization plans;
- the right of consumers to repair the electronic products they own without engaging the original manufacturer;
- the establishment of the Office of Digital Inclusion to, among other things, increase access and connection to broadband Internet services throughout the State; and
- establishing a “dig once” law that allows the placing of broadband conduits when land is excavated for other purposes and establishing a digital inclusion fund to support less financially viable broadband projects.

Please contact us or the joint committee staff, Richard Duncan, Erika Schissler, and Donavan Ham, if you have any questions concerning the joint committee’s activities.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie Fry Hester
Senate Chair



Michael A. Jackson
House Chair

KFH:MAJ/RLD/ma

cc: Ms. Victoria L. Gruber
Mr. Ryan Bishop
Ms. Alexandra Hughes
Mr. Jake Weissmann