



Senator Brian Feldman, *Chair*  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re:     ***Senate Bill 799: Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide - Development, Usage, and Reporting***  
          **- SUPPORT**

**March 14, 2023**

Dear Chairman Feldman and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

As President & Chief Executive Officer of the National Cryptologic Foundation (NCF) and member of the Maryland Cybersecurity Council on the Workforce Development Sub-committee, I write this letter in support of Senate Bill 799, entitled: "*Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide - Development, Usage, and Reporting.*"

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Behavioral Health Administration within the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Center for School Safety (center), and the Department of Information Technology, by July 1, 2024, to jointly develop and publish a cyber safety guide for students, parents, and employees and to implement it in public schools beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

NCF's mission is to strengthen trust in the digital ecosystem to ensure democracy and freedom. We educate and engage our citizens, especially our youth, to be cyber-smart individuals, develop pathways for our future cyber workforce, and engage and convene partners to address emerging cyber issues.

Over the past two years, our children have been online more than ever as they have adapted to remote learning. Our public school systems and families were forced to adjust quickly to a new normal without having the luxury of time to plan thoroughly and ensure that all were operating in a safe environment. Parents and children found themselves working, learning, and socializing online. While the Internet can provide a wide range of fun and educational activities, inherent risks must be understood, especially as kids surpass their parents in tech savviness. Protecting our children's digital identity and ensuring a safe environment for learning is critical.

Developing a Cyber Safety Guide will equip today's students to understand the interconnected world around us better. This can include:

- **What is cybersecurity? We all hear this term used, but what does it really mean?**

Taking good care of all online data makes the Internet useful, important, and necessary in our lives. This involves everyone acting in various roles as individuals, schools, companies, or the government. As we consider taking care of ourselves and our own “healthcare,” we ensure that we eat healthily, exercise, and, when necessary, seek help from healthcare professionals. In the same way, we must take steps to ensure our cyber health through “data care,” ensuring that our data is secure, appropriately accessible, and reliably accurate.

- **Why is cybersecurity or “data care” important to students?**

Every time you go online, data is transmitted back and forth between an individual and many data-gathering technologies. Consider the mobile phone and its various uses (talking, texting, video chatting, playing games, streaming content, using apps, spending and accepting money, and using online accounts) while transmitting background data such as geolocation or other identification information.

These are all connected to us individually. What could go wrong? You might click on a link in an email that you think is safe but turns out to be phishing malware and opens a webpage that downloads a virus to your phone. Someone could hack into one of your accounts, running up charges or draining your funds. Someone might use the credentials of a teacher or principal to create chaos through a false bomb scare that is texted to all students. Children must understand the benefits and pitfalls of operating in an interconnected online environment.

- **Other considerations for a student’s online presence?**

- **Think before you post** - Our online actions can have long-lasting effects that need to be considered. In today’s era of social media, adults and children post their activities with photos, memes, likes, and dislikes. Our children must understand that once something is posted online, it becomes somewhat permanent. Potential employers or college admissions boards may view a seemingly harmless post unfavorably. Understanding the privacy settings of the applications must be a priority for adults and children.
- **Stranger danger** - We teach our children to be wary of strangers; the same applies to online behavior. Our children must understand how to spot red flags online communication with strangers. Of course, the best response is no response, but they must understand the dangers and consequences.
- **Cyberbullying** – Bullying of any type can have severe consequences for our children. Cyberbullying (posting mean comments, spreading rumors, threatening or impersonating someone) can have broad psychological implications. Children must feel comfortable speaking with a parent or another trusted adult if they are being harassed. Likewise, those who bully must understand the consequences of their actions.

The cyber safety guide will provide students, parents, and teachers with the necessary tools and guidance for safe Internet, social media, and technology use. Our children must be prepared to live in a world of interconnected phones, computers, and “things” and understand how to best protect themselves and ensure their privacy and security.

It is for these reasons; I am in full support of SB799. This legislation was introduced last year and I continue to strongly urge this committee to give this legislation a **FAVORABLE** report and to enact this important piece of legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Laura Nelson

*President & Chief Executive Officer*  
National Cryptologic Foundation