

Meeting Minutes
Subcommittee on Economic Development
June 2, 2021
Virtual Meeting
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Member Attendance (7/12)

Bel Leong-Hong (Chair), Vince Diffrancisci, Donald Fry, Brian Israel, Mathew Lee, Christine Ross, and Steven Tiller.

Staff Attendance

Laura Corcoran (NSA Fellow, OAG), Howard Barr (Assistant Attorney General and General Counsel, DoIT), Dr. Greg von Lehmen (University of Maryland Global Campus, Assigned Staff

Mr. Israel acknowledged that COVID had produced a shift but stated that incentivizing people to live in Maryland has significant follow-on benefits to the State in terms of home ownership, local shopping, and tax payments. He did not see the solution as either/or. He asked why an incentive program could not be part of the strategy to attract talent live in the State.

Mr. Difrancisci agreed that some type of incentive program could be part of a solution set for the State. But he recommended that there be a focus on creating opportunities for citizens who are under-represented in cybersecurity and tech sector jobs generally. Ms. Leong-hong expressed strong support for initiatives of this type.

Ms. Ross suggested that the subcommittee and the Council would accomplish more if it could work with the Governor's Workforce Board. She noted that part of the solution is for companies to retool their job descriptions to focus on competencies rather than on degrees, to identify basic jobs as entry points where deep skills or a degree are not needed, and to participate in apprenticeship programs.

Ms. Leong-hong suggested that the State Departments of Commerce and Labor could facilitate the transition of firms to state job requirements in terms of competencies rather than degrees. Mr. Difrancisci observed that companies in fact are already making this transition. He stated that more funding for internships and apprenticeship could be consequential for the State in moving under-represented groups into the tech workforce. Ms. Leong-hong agreed that crafting such a recommendation might be worth considering.

Ms. Leong-hong asked whether there were other ideas that members had.

Mr. Lee mentioned that TEDCO's cyber fund is not well understood and that perhaps

Addressing the income tax credit as the incentive, Mr. Tiller observed that now is not the best time to propose measures that would reduce State revenues. He also doubted that he that a tax credit of the level offered by Oklahoma would have any recruitment power, but acknowledged that other incentives, like a student loan forgiveness program, potentially could incentivize relocation. More generally, however, he agreed with others that the better strategy is to invest in training and education opportunities of the Maryland residents who are not well represented in tech fields.

Resolution and action: The subcommittee agreed to commit the proposed recommendation to further study, considering the views expressed.

Before moving to the next agenda item, Ms. Leong-hong reiterated the importance of the subcommittee collaborating with Senator Hester's subcommittee. Mr. Diffrancisci agreed, noting that a strong workforce is key to developing, attracting, and retaining cybersecurity firms in the State.

4) Other business. Ms. Leong-Hong asked the NSA Fellow, Laura Corcoran, to comment on recent cybersecurity events. She discussed how ransomware had evolved to double extortion, the Colonial Pipeline attack, the recent presidential Executive Order on cybersecurity, and the GAO report on cyber insurance. She noted that the trend is for attackers to determine who has insurance and to price their ransom accordingly.

Mr. Tiller noted that as a tactic this is similar to how attz

5) Adjournment. She asked if there was other business for the subcommittee to consider. Hearing none, she duly adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm upon motions made and seconded.

[Note: These minutes were approved at the 20 October 2021 meeting of the subcommittee.]