



Representative Erika White
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 475
House Technology and Innovation Committee
Tuesday, October 21st, 2025

Thank you Chair Claggett and Vice Chair Workman for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 475. This legislation will strengthen local municipalities responses to cyber security threats. Local governments across our state remain vulnerable to cyber security threats and they often lack the tools and resources to be best equipped to navigate threats.

The legislation that Ranking Member Mohamed and I have introduced works to better support our local governments with tools to mitigate harm from hackers and reduce the risk of confidential information being accessed.

This legislation requires that state cybersecurity advisors conduct an annual assessment of municipal cybersecurity infrastructures and report their findings to the General Assembly. The state cyber security advisory who was appointed in 2022, and the chief information security officer would now be required to submit a report of their assessment to the Governor. The opportunity for legislators to stay up to date on potential risks to their district's is a proactive measure that would be mutually beneficial to both the municipality and the legislature. We cannot be proactive when we are unaware of potential risks.

The bill also provides an opportunity for the state's cybersecurity strategic advisor to contract with Ohio-based private cybersecurity firms for services such as assisting with the assessment of a municipalities cybersecurity infrastructure and responding to a cyber security incident. This provision allows the state to re-invest its funds into Ohio businesses and further stimulate the economy while also providing a room for expansion in a developing field.

This legislation also creates a toll-free number which may be used by a state, county, or local municipality to report a cyberattack and request the support of the Ohio cyber reserve. This line would be staffed by live personnel on 24 hours a day basis. This safe and secure line would allow for governments to receive immediate assistance which can make all the difference when it comes to the rapid developments that can occur when it comes to a cyber-attack.

Our local governments are on the front lines of public service — managing utilities, emergency response, public safety data, housing assistance, and more. When these systems are compromised, it's not just about computers — it's about real people losing access to critical services.

We have seen ransomware and phishing attacks in Ohio and across the nation that shut down police departments, hospitals, and even local 911 systems. For small and mid-sized municipalities, one attack can disrupt daily operations, expose sensitive information, and drain already limited resources.

HB 475 takes proactive steps to help communities prepare, prevent, and respond to these threats — before a crisis occurs. Furthermore, HB 475 recognizes that not every community has the same resources or technical expertise. Some municipalities can afford in-house IT staff and advanced systems — others cannot.

By creating statewide standards and guidance, HB 475 helps level the playing field. Every Ohioan deserves to have their data protected and their local services running safely — whether they live in Toledo, Youngstown, Franklin township or a rural community in our state. HB 475 is about foresight and fairness. It's about preventing the next crisis before it happens and ensuring that no community is left unprotected simply because they lack resources or technical capacity.

As a legislator who deeply values transparency, accountability, and community trust, I believe this bill reinforces the foundation of good governance in a digital age. I want to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Mohamed, and this committee for your thoughtful consideration of HB 475. Together, we can strengthen Ohio's cyber resilience and safeguard the systems our communities depend on every day.

Digital safety is community safety. When every local government is better protected, the entire state becomes stronger. Colleagues, in our committee we are made aware of more technologies and their seemingly overnight evolution. While these can greatly aid in our endeavors, we must not underscore the potential risks they may pose. This legislation provides an avenue to protect our cities from the potential risks they might encounter. I respectfully urge passage of House Bill 475. Thank you for your time and your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions.