

Assembly Bill 1023

Cybersecurity

AB 1023

Would ensure that any measures undertaken by the California Cybersecurity Integration Center (Cal-CSIC) to assist local agencies would include and benefit school districts and county offices of education.

Authored by Assemblymember Diane Papan

Throughout California, districts small and large have been victimized by cyberattacks that shut down operations, hold data hostage and put student and staff privacy at risk. AB 1023 earns a gold star for addressing this escalating issue and providing schools with access to resources to deter cyberattacks.

Why is it needed?

As ransomware attacks continue to grow, local educational agencies have increasingly been identified as soft targets lacking the capacity to ward off hackers. For school districts and county offices of education, it is not a matter of if — but when — their school information system will be subject to a cybersecurity attack.

California's largest school districts and some of its smallest have been victimized by cyberattacks, compromising sensitive information like Social Security Numbers, transcripts, discipline reports and health records, taking down information systems and forcing temporary school closures. In 2022 alone, cyberattacks against the education sector increased by 36 percent from the previous year and smaller districts are especially vulnerable since they often lack the resources and staff to address cyberattacks.

How does it work?

CSBA is sponsoring AB 1023 to provide schools with access to the resources and expertise needed to implement effective cybersecurity defense. The California Cybersecurity Integration Center (Cal-CSIC) is the main state agency charged with government cybersecurity. Established in statute, the responsibility of Cal-CSIC is to assist government agencies throughout the state, yet schools are not identified as recipients of this support — a significant oversight.

Schools have access to more sensitive information and fulfill a more essential purpose than virtually any other local government agency, and deserve robust, focused support to prepare for ransomware attacks. This support is important for all school districts but is especially needed in small districts that lack both the resources and candidate pool to hire experienced cybersecurity personnel.

How would it help?

AB 1023 would ensure that any measures undertaken by Cal-CSIC to assist local agencies would include and benefit school districts and county offices of education. At a time when schools are increasingly targeted by sophisticated cybercriminals and frequently lack the resources for effective cyberdefense, it's critical that the state direct support to the education sector to safeguard school operations and protect sensitive data for students, staff and families.

