



SENATOR MICHAEL O. MOORE

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 109B – BOSTON, MA 02133-1053

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Facebook: Senator Mike Moore

Twitter: @SenMikeMoore

Contact: Alex Mootafian
alex.mootafian@masenate.gov

Healey-Driscoll Administration Announces 2023 Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program Awards

(BOSTON 2/10/2023) – This week, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced the 2023 Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program award recipients. Administered by the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security and its Office of Municipal and School Technology, this program will provide over 50,000 employees from 177 municipalities and public school districts across the Commonwealth with critical cybersecurity training to better detect and avoid cyber threats. Recipients include the town of Auburn, Auburn Public Schools, and the town of Westborough.

The 2023 Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program, which is funded by \$250,000 in capital funds authorized by the Legislature in the 2022 General Governmental Bond Bill, is designed to support local government efforts to improve overall cybersecurity posture through comprehensive online end-user training, evaluation, and threat simulation. Awarded communities will receive licenses for end-user training, assessment, and phishing simulation procured by the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS). Demonstrated buy-in from the Chief Executive in the community is a requirement of all program participants.

“At a time when devastating cyber attacks are on the rise, I’m pleased that the Healey-Driscoll administration and EOTSS are using legislature-appropriated funds to improve cybersecurity awareness for employees in our town governments and public schools,” said **Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury)**. “While this program is a great step in the right direction, Massachusetts needs to do more to protect our infrastructure, companies, and residents from cyber criminals. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues and the governor to make

our systems more proactive and responsive to the threat of cyber attacks, including through the passage of my legislation establishing a Cybersecurity Control and Review Commission.”

“This grant gives the Town of Westborough the opportunity to train municipal employees in crucial cybersecurity detection to avoid cyber threats, and ultimately keep the municipality safe from devastating and costly cyber-attacks” said **Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury)**. “Thank you to EOTSS for awarding this grant and congratulations Westborough.”

“I was very pleased to hear that Westborough was included in this program,” **Representative Kate Donaghue (D-Westborough)** added.

Representative Paul Frost (R-Auburn) commented, "I am pleased to announce that Auburn is among the recipients of this state grant program for cyber security training. The internet is an important and efficient tool used in everyday life yet comes with risks. Unfortunately, there are always those looking to hack and or steal information online. Investing in cyber security is necessary to handle these ongoing challenges to online safety and protect the interests of our communities and schools."

Program participants begin their training with an initial cyber strength assessment to measure baseline cybersecurity awareness. Following the assessments, periodic assessments consisting of training modules and simulated phishing email campaigns help participants build good cyber hygiene habits to increase their awareness of deceptive techniques used by bad actors to gain unauthorized access to government systems. At the end of the program, participants complete a final cyber strength assessment to measure their progress.

The Commonwealth offers the training program free of cost to organizations, who are further supported with quarterly threat briefings and weekly newsletters with cybersecurity best practices and program updates provided by the Office of Municipal and School Technology. Municipal information technology officials also receive monthly summary progress reports that detail the number of employees that inadvertently clicked on malicious links contained in the simulated phishing emails, offering important visibility on the threat landscape.

In addition to the Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program, The Healey-Driscoll Administration offers a number of other programs to further support municipal officials in their cybersecurity and information technology modernization efforts, including the Free Cybersecurity Health Check Program, the Community Compact IT Grant Program, and the Municipal Fiber Grant Program.

Municipal leaders are receiving additional support in their efforts to strengthen the cybersecurity posture of their respective organizations with the arrival of the first-of-its-kind State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program. Included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed by Congress in 2021, the \$1 billion grant program will provide much-needed funding to states to enhance municipal cybersecurity capabilities to defend against the increasing threat of cyber attacks that attempt to disrupt critical government service operations.

To see the full list of awardees, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2023-municipal-awardee-list/download>.

For more on the Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/municipal-cybersecurity-awareness-grant-program>.

For more information on the full list of municipal cybersecurity and IT program offerings from the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security's Office of Municipal and School Technology, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/all-office-of-municipal-and-school-technology-omst-programs>.

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