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For Immediate Release - Senator Joyce Waddell's School Cybersecurity

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Sent: Friday, March 09, 2018 9:24 AM



From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 9, 2018

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School Cybersecurity

Charlotte, NC – On Tuesday, March 6, members of the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee heard from Phil Emer, Director of Technology Planning and Policy at the Friday Institute For Educational Innovation, on the state’s efforts to prevent cybersecurity threats. Emer informed lawmakers that most North Carolina school districts are susceptible to cyberattacks and are not prepared to deal with massive breaches and intrusions into their computer systems. Last year, lawmakers allocated \$200,000 in the state budget to help with the issue of school cybersecurity, which can be costly. Recently, school districts have become targets of software attacks designed to shut down systems unless a ransom is paid. For example, just last year, hackers froze Mecklenburg County’s government and demanded a ransom. The most common attack used on school systems is e-mail.

An initiative dealing with cybersecurity and risk management has been introduced in order to help with the issue of school cybersecurity. The initiative involves a three-step process, part of it including a risk assessment dashboard that can check for vulnerabilities, see what issues need attention, calculate risk scores, apply fixes, and more. The system is scheduled to be implemented in all schools and districts after testing concludes this spring.

“It is evident from the recent attack in Mecklenburg County that school cybersecurity is an issue that needs to be addressed. I am glad to see that steps are being taken to combat hackers and ensure that schools adopt practices that will lessen the likelihood of cyberattacks,” said Senator Joyce Waddell.

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