



Cybersecurity

Policy Position Statement:

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation dedicating state resources for the development and enhancement of municipal cybersecurity by providing funding for technical assistance, threat assessments, employee training, infrastructure improvements and data protection, including the protection of exempt and confidential information such as law enforcement personnel information and plans for government buildings and other critical infrastructure.

Background:

Local governments are routinely entrusted with gigabytes of personally identifiable, confidential and proprietary information about the businesses and citizens who live and operate within their jurisdictions. A number of high-profile cyber incidents in the public sector have highlighted the emerging and costly challenges that cities face in protecting these data. A recent study by Cyber Florida shows public sector organizations made up 78% of ransomware victims from 2016-2019.

The “hidden” impact on local government operations when a system is compromised, whether it is longer response times for police and fire personnel, delays in service delivery to utility customers or holdups in the permitting process for businesses, often is more significant than any ransom payment. The loss of personally identifiable, confidential and proprietary information about businesses and citizens has its own critical and personal cost impacts but also contributes to the public losing trust in its government.

Local governments urgently need help from the state in three primary areas: technical assistance, training and infrastructure improvements. Outside experts should be retained to conduct threat assessments to identify operational and system vulnerabilities so that all are irrevocably addressed before they are exploited. Local governments should increase training for employees, emphasize the importance of being a cyber-aware organization and develop response plans in the event of a security breach. Finally, many cities and counties must devote resources to improving critical cyberinfrastructure to ensure that hardware and software are impenetrable.

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