North Dakota is the first U.S. state to authorize a central, shared-service approach to cybersecurity across all parts of state government, says Gov. Doug Burgum, who signed SB 2110 into law in April. Legislators also invested more than $15 million in the new biennial budget to add more cybersecurity personnel and enhance protective software.

With this new unified approach, all of the state’s executive branch agencies, courts, schools, cities and counties will have a common cybersecurity strategy — as overseen by the North Dakota Information Technology Department. Previously, the state had more than 400 entities responsible for their own strategies. North Dakota’s statewide network (STAGEnet) has about 252,000 daily users.

Nationwide, cybersecurity makes up between 1 percent and 2 percent of a state’s total information technology budget, according to a study released in 2018 by the National Association of State Chief Information Officers. That same study listed the three top barriers to states addressing their cybersecurity challenges: 1) lack of a sufficient budget; 2) inadequate staffing; and 3) the increased sophistication of cyberthreats.