



March 1, 2023

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East, Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 938 Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (the Council) is submitting this letter of concern for Senate Bill 938 (SB 938), titled: "Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention." SB 938 would require the Maryland Department of Health (Department) to develop and implement a public education campaign on prostate, lung, and breast cancer prevention that targets communities disproportionately impacted by prostate, lung, and breast cancer.

The Council supports the aim of SB 938 but is very concerned that funding for SB 938 comes from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), given that a diversion of CRF funds would have a negative impact on existing public health activities.

We agree with and support the goal of a public education campaign focused on preventing prostate, lung, and breast cancer within communities bearing the brunt of these illnesses as it holds immense potential to improve public health. These communities often face significant barriers to preventative care. Socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and language access can create hurdles in accessing information and screenings. Tailored education campaigns bridge these gaps by delivering culturally relevant and accessible information in familiar languages and formats. Empowering individuals with knowledge about early detection, risk factors, and healthy lifestyle choices is key to encouraging proactive healthcare seeking and potentially saving lives.

The Council has serious concerns that funding for SB 938 would have the effect of diverting funds from current CRF programs. Reducing the allocation of the CRF in Maryland could have negative consequences for public health and well-being across the state. The CRF serves as a vital funding source for numerous critical programs, making it an investment in the state's future health. The CRF plays a central role in combating tobacco use and its associated health problems by preventing smoking initiation, encouraging cessation, and ultimately reducing the burden of tobacco-related disease, a



leading cause of preventable death. Additionally, the CRF fuels cancer prevention, education, screening, and treatment initiatives, improving early detection and survival. This is particularly crucial for low-income and underserved communities who often face higher cancer risks, limited resources, and limited access to healthcare.

The CRF represents an investment in Maryland's residents, their health, and their future. By safeguarding this crucial funding source, the state can continue its fight against preventable diseases, empower individuals struggling with tobacco addiction, and ensure equitable access to healthcare for all.

As it is currently written, the Council urges the Committee to vote against SB 938 and prioritize the critical public health programs already supported by the CRF, ensuring Maryland continues its commitment to a healthier future for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin J. Cullen, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kevin Cullen, MD
Chair,
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control