



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

Chair: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

March 4, 2024

House Bill 1293: Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 1293: Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention.

Claiming over 600,000 lives in 2021, cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States. There are several factors that contribute to the prognostics of cancer, some including the type, time of diagnosis, and stage of progression. Depending on the location of initial development, different cancers carry different levels of mortality. In the United States, lung cancer is the most fatal type of cancer in both men and women. Breast and prostate cancer are the second most fatal cancers for women and men, respectively. Risk factors (albeit physical or behavioral) can increase the chances of one developing a disease. Modifiable risk factors are ones that an individual has control over, such as diet, exercise, smoking, etc. Non-modifiable factors are ones that we cannot change; this includes age, race/ethnicity, or sex. Based on such risk factors, there is an evident disparity among marginalized and minority groups. Taking a closer look at modifiable risk factors, many cancers can be prevented if one abstains from smoking and heavy drinking, exercises regularly, and has a healthy diet. Per the data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of smoking, heavy drinking, and obesity is higher among Black communities (2023). For non-modifiable risk factors, race/ethnicity is arguably the most influential on susceptibility of disease. Black people are more likely than white people to not only develop but also die from prostate and lung cancer. They have a lower chance of survivability 5 years after initiation of treatment and are less likely to be diagnosed early. Breast cancer may be more common in white women, but Black women are still more likely to die from it (CDC, 2023). For those living in rural areas, the incidence of cancer may be lower when compared to urban areas, but the mortality rate is higher, meaning the number of rural residents who do develop cancer are much more likely to die than those who live in urban areas (Henley, 2017). The best intervention used for reducing death by cancer is through early diagnosis and education. Public education is a primary level of prevention that empowers the community to make informed decisions about their health and helps to lower morbidity and mortality within our communities. With the enactment of House Bill 1293, Maryland residents who are at a higher risk for developing lung, breast, or prostate cancer will have the opportunity to receive proper education on how to reduce their risk for developing cancer. With the many benefits House Bill 1293 brings to rural Maryland communities, the Maryland Rural Health Association supports the passing of this bill.

On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *African American people and cancer*. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/health-equity/groups/african-american.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Leading causes of death*. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

Henley, S. J., Anderson, R. N., Thomas, C. C., Masettii, J. M., Peaker, B., & Richardson, L. C. (2017). Invasive cancer incidence, 2004–2013, and deaths, 2006–2015, in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan counties — United States. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. 66(14), 1-13. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/ss/ss6614a1.htm#suggestedcitation>