



**February 26, 2025**

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair  
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Re: SB849 - Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program – Funding

The Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland represents more than 10,000 active and retired professional fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel who proudly serve the citizens of the State of Maryland.

SB849 would increase the annual budget authorization for the Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000. Most significantly, it is important to emphasize the life-saving potential of this initiative and the importance of ensuring its continuous improvement through robust data analysis.

Firefighters face unique occupational hazards that place them at an increased risk of developing various forms of cancer. Due to frequent exposure to harmful chemicals and carcinogens, our brave men and women in the fire service deserve the highest level of care and early detection strategies. This program has already shown promising results by providing innovative cancer screening technologies that could lead to earlier diagnoses and better outcomes for those who serve our communities.

## **Rationale for Increasing Funding**

### **1. Enhancing Early Detection:**

The proposed funding increase—from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000—will significantly expand the scope of screening technologies and allow for a more comprehensive application of these advanced diagnostic tools. Early detection is critical to improving survival rates, and the additional resources will enable us to screen more firefighters, providing timely intervention that can save lives.

### **2. Expanding Research and Technology Integration:**

The current budget level limits the program's ability to integrate the latest cancer screening innovations. With increased funding, we can support further research and development in this field, ensuring that the program remains at the forefront of medical innovation.

### **3. Addressing a Critical Need:**

Firefighters are a vital part of our community infrastructure, and their well-being directly impacts public safety. An increase to \$3,000,000 reflects a proactive approach to addressing their unique healthcare challenges and demonstrates a commitment to supporting those who protect us day in and day out.

## **Support for Data-Driven Program Improvement**

In addition to increasing the funding, the legislation authorizes the Secretary of Health to use up to 20% of Program funds to support academic medical centers in collecting, analyzing, and processing outcome data. This component of the legislation is particularly critical for several reasons:

### **1. Ensuring Accountability and Transparency:**

By dedicating resources to rigorous data collection and analysis, we can objectively measure the program's effectiveness. This transparency will not only justify the increased investment but also guide future improvements in cancer screening protocols.

### **2. Maximizing Clinical Utility:**

Collaborating with leading academic medical centers will facilitate the synthesis of clinical data into actionable insights. These insights can drive refinements in screening techniques, ensuring that the program continually adapts to new medical evidence and technological advancements.

### 3. Informing Policy and Best Practices:

A robust data infrastructure will help create a feedback loop that informs the program. The outcomes of this analysis can lead to best practices that may improve the program and offer pathways to new or more advanced screening methods.

In summary, increasing the annual budget authorization to \$3,000,000 and allocating up to 20% of program funds for academic data analysis represent a strategic investment in the health and well-being of our firefighters. This legislation is a forward-thinking measure designed to enhance early cancer detection, drive technological innovation, and ensure continuous improvement through data-driven analysis.

On behalf of the members of Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, we strongly urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 849.

Submitted respectfully,



Jeffrey Buddle, President  
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

*The membership of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland includes 25 IAFF local affiliates from the following jurisdictions:*

*Federal: Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Fort George G. Meade, National Capital Federal Fire Fighters*

*State: Baltimore / Washington International Airport*

*Local: Annapolis City, Allegany County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City (2 affiliates), Baltimore County, Carroll County, Cecil County, Charles County, Cumberland City, Frederick County, Garrett County, Hagerstown, Howard County, Montgomery County, Ocean City, Prince Georges County, Queen Annes County, Salisbury, Talbot County, Worchester County*