



Senate Bill 849

Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program - Funding

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget & Taxation and Finance Committees

Date: February 26, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 849, which enhances funding for the Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program. This bill increases the authorized annual budget allocation from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000 and permits up to 20% of these funds to be used by academic medical centers for data collection, analysis, and processing. These measures will significantly improve access to critical cancer screenings for firefighters across the state.

Counties fully support improving the health and safety of firefighters and all employees. Local governments have already taken substantial steps to provide extensive health coverage, including cancer screenings for firefighters. However, many jurisdictions with constrained budgets rely on grant programs to support these efforts. SB 849 offers another tool to help counties fulfill their commitment to firefighter health and safety without imposing additional unfunded mandates on local governments.

Counties recognize the critical contributions of firefighters, and the additional exposures and risks they assume as part of their duties. Those who employ career firefighters already offer various forms of cancer screening, but this legislation would help enhance and underpin those programs, and provide essential resources for expansion and improvement. Additionally, supporting academic medical centers in data collection and analysis will help refine screening methods, ensuring their effectiveness and clinical utility.

Counties have historically championed forward-thinking Firefighter and EMS incentives such as MACo's 2024 initiative bill, which enhanced firefighter recruitment and retention tools. Additionally, counties encourage participation in the Maryland Professional and Volunteer Firefighters Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program. Expanding the program's funding will help ensure that all firefighters—both career and volunteer—receive necessary cancer screenings, ultimately saving lives and supporting long-term public safety efforts.

For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 849.