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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**Testimony in Support of HB757: Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program - Funding  
February 26, 2025**

Chair Korman and distinguished members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 757**. This bill increases the funding for the Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Screening Technologies program by allowing the governor to allocate up to \$3,000,000 in the annual budget. As drafted, it allocates a portion of the Barrel Fee from Oil transferred in the state to the fund.

Firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer than the general U.S. population; occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths for firefighters. Since diagnosis at an early stage can significantly increase an individual's chance of survival for most types of cancer, ensuring firefighters can detect cancer early is critically important.

The US Preventive Services Task Force (USPTF) recommends a single-cancer screening procedure for breast, colon, colorectal, and lung cancers. However, according to the American Cancer Society, nearly 70% of cancer deaths have resulted from cancers for which there are no approved screening tests. Innovative multi-cancer early detection (MCED) tests, which are the focus of this legislation, can provide a solution. Relying on machine-learning to identify tumor proteins in a patient's DNA, research has shown these tests provide an effective way to detect cancers for which a USPTF-approved screening procedure doesn't exist.

Established in 2019, the Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program provides grants to local and volunteer fire departments to procure MCED tests. Given the "innovative" nature of these tests they are both expensive—MDH reported an average cost of \$192 per test in FY24—and often not covered by insurance. The grants are therefore necessary for ensuring these critical tests are accessible to firefighters. During FY24, \$100,000 was appropriated to the Program, and this money funded MCED tests for 513 firefighters—a small percentage of the total firefighters in the State. For some, test results showed elevated risks of developing, among others, stomach, liver, pancreatic, ovarian, and prostate cancers.

With the program's success over the past years, this bill aims to fund testing for more of Maryland's firefighters. We will work with the committee and stakeholders to find the best way to fund these tests. I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 757**.