



**SB 849 - Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative
Cancer Screening Technologies Program - Funding
Urging a Favorable Report
Wednesday, March 26, 2025
House Environment and Transportation Committee**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 849 - Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program – Funding. The University of Maryland Institute for Health Computing (UM-IHC) is a signature initiative of the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: *MPowering the State* and is the hub for health computing innovation and collaboration serving the state of Maryland. UM-IHC merges the computational expertise, clinical expertise, biomedical innovation, health data and academic resources of the University of Maryland, College Park; the University of Maryland, Baltimore; and the University of Maryland Medical System to innovate health care delivery and support the life science community.

Partnering with the state’s critical mass of federal agencies and biotech industries, UM-IHC works every day to harness massive data and advanced computing to improve well-being and quality of life, fight disease and enhance outcomes for all people across Maryland and beyond.

You may have read about toxic fallouts stemming from recent wildfires. In fact, IHC researchers have linked smoke from Western Canadian wildfires with subsequent massive increases in lung- and heart-related medical visits right here in Baltimore. Well – firefighters face this nearly every day. Many are unaware that firefighters face heightened cancer risks through routine exposure to carcinogens. One study has even shown that firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer compared to the general U.S. population. Therefore, the Maryland Department of Health created a program that provides grants allowing firefighters to receive advanced cancer screening tests and thus reduce cancer-related mortality.

This successful initial program now seeks to help even more people. This bill grows the Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program, and mandates detailed analysis of performance data to ensure that the program delivers on its mission. Our firefighters risk their lives to protect us. It’s our responsibility to safeguard their health in return. This bill gives firefighters tools for early cancer detection, ultimately saving lives and honoring their unwavering commitment to public safety.

Thank you for your consideration and we respectfully urge a favorable committee report on SB 849.