



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 849. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Firefighters risk their lives daily, battling fires and enduring exposure to toxic chemicals and fumes, and as a result, they experience a significantly higher rate of cancer. In 2023, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) reported that 72% of member line-of-duty deaths were due to occupational cancer¹, emphasizing the need for early detection and prevention.

SB 849 increases the annual amount the Governor may include in the budget for the Professional and Volunteer Firefighter Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000, providing for continuous improvement of these technologies which could lead to earlier diagnoses and better outcomes for those impacted. Additionally, this bill allows the Secretary to use funds from the Program to support research centers in their efforts to improve cancer screening, enhancing transparency, accountability, adaptability, and the creation of well-informed policy.

Given the nature of their profession and the inherent risk associated with it, we have the opportunity to support these brave individuals by ensuring they are provided with the essential resources needed to detect cancer. By providing funding for detection, we can help better prevent

¹ "Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness Month." International Association of Fire Fighters. 2023.

this from impacting the lives that give back to our communities. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 849.