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**SB 0523**

February 11, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Finance Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of the Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** Senate Bill 0523 – State Employees - Cancer Screening - Paid Leave

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 0523.

SB 523 provides that certain State employees are entitled to a certain amount of cancer screening leave with pay under certain circumstances; and generally relating to cancer screening leave for State employees.

SB 523 applies only to state employees, and the City already provides this benefit to its employees. However, we are submitting this written testimony to highlight the positive impacts and benefits this policy has had for City workers.

**How the Program Works:**

The City of Baltimore offers its employees paid leave for cancer screenings as part of its commitment to employee well-being and preventive healthcare. This initiative, outlined in the City's Administrative Manual, ensures that employees can receive critical medical screenings without using their accrued leave time. Permanent full-time and permanent part-time employees are eligible for up to four (4) hours of Permission (P) time per calendar year to undergo cancer screenings. This time is not deducted from an employee's accrued leave balance, such as sick, vacation, or personal leave. However, if the screening appointment requires more than four hours, the additional time must be charged to the employee's accrued leave.

To request leave for cancer screening, employees must obtain prior approval from their supervisor before taking time off. They are required to submit a Request for Time Off Form as soon as their appointment is scheduled to allow the department to ensure adequate coverage. After completing the screening, employees must provide their supervisor with a Cancer Screening Program Certification Form, which is completed by the physician or medical facility conducting the screening. The supervisor verifies the screening and submits the certification form to the agency's

Human Resources/Personnel Office for record-keeping. This process ensures that Permission (P) time is properly documented for payroll processing while maintaining confidentiality in personnel records.

### **Benefits to Employees and the City:**

The Cancer Screening Leave Program provides significant advantages to both employees and the City of Baltimore. By allowing employees to take paid leave for cancer screenings, the City actively supports preventive healthcare, which can lead to early detection and better health outcomes. Employees who take advantage of this program can identify potential health concerns before they become serious, increasing their chances of successful treatment and long-term well-being.

For employees, this program removes financial and work-related barriers to seeking medical care. Rather than having to use their accrued leave or forego necessary screenings, they can access preventive healthcare without concern for lost wages or scheduling conflicts. This not only reduces stress but also promotes a healthier and more engaged workforce, leading to higher morale and greater job satisfaction.

For the City, encouraging preventive care through paid cancer screening leave helps reduce long-term healthcare costs. Early detection of cancer can lead to lower medical expenses by preventing the need for costly late-stage treatments. Additionally, a workforce that prioritizes health is less likely to experience prolonged medical absences, which can lead to increased productivity and operational efficiency. Employees who maintain their health are more consistent in their attendance, reducing disruptions and ensuring that City services continue to function effectively.

The Office of the Labor Commissioner (“OLC”) is responsible for administering the Cancer Screening Leave Program. While we do not have direct access to data regarding how often employees utilize this leave, we defer to the OLC for insights into utilization trends. The OLC may track these trends to assess the impact of the program and determine whether any policy adjustments are needed to improve its effectiveness.

Baltimore City’s Cancer Screening Leave Program is a strategic initiative designed to enhance employee health, lower healthcare costs, and improve workforce productivity. By eliminating barriers to preventive care, the City supports its employees in prioritizing their health while ensuring that municipal operations benefit from a healthier, more engaged workforce. This initiative represents a balanced approach that benefits both employees and the City by fostering a workplace culture that values well-being, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

The BCA respectfully requests a **support** report on SB 0523 for these reasons.