



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB459

Testimony by Delegate Andrew Pruski

February 6, 2025 – Health and Government Operations

What the Bill Does:

HB459 requires health insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage to professional firefighters for preventive cancer screenings in line with the latest screening guidelines issued by the International Association of Fire Fighters. These recommendations currently include specified screenings for bladder, breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, oral, prostate, skin, testicular, and thyroid cancers. It also includes that a carrier may not impose a copayment, coinsurance, or deductible on such coverage with a specified exemption for high-deductible health plan (HDHP). A county or municipality that offers a self-insured employee health benefit plan in the State and the State Employee and Retiree Health and Welfare Benefits Program must comply with the bill.

Why the Bill is Important:

Fire fighters' frequent exposure to known and unknown carcinogens, toxic chemicals, smoke, and hazardous material makes them prone to cancer. In 2022, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reclassified firefighting as carcinogenic to humans, which is IARC's highest carcinogenic hazard classification. Studies have shown fire fighters have a 9 percent greater risk of being diagnosed with cancer and 14 percent increase in cancer mortality rate than the general population. Cancer screenings help detect cancer early, when it's easier to treat and cure. This bill would require all health insurers, service plans and maintenance organizations to cover the cost of cancer screenings for all professional firefighters.

Cancer is something that is personal to so many Marylanders. This bill is personal. I had the pleasure of meeting former Delegate James "Jimmy" Malone many times, who this bill is named after. He lost his battle to brain cancer after a lifetime of dedicated service, beginning with his time as a professional firefighter. Preventative cancer screenings will save lives of firefighters, the first responders who save the lives of Marylanders every day. **On behalf of Maryland's Professional Fire Fighters, I urge a favorable report on HB459.**