



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

*To the House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 04, 2025*

House Bill 0459: Health Insurance – Cancer Screening for Professional Firefighters – Required Coverage (James "Jimmy" Malone Act)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk,

On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA), I am writing in strong support of **HB0459: Health Insurance – Cancer Screening for Professional Firefighters – Required Coverage (James "Jimmy" Malone Act)**. This critical legislation is an important step forward in safeguarding the health and well-being of the dedicated professional firefighters who serve our communities across Maryland.

Firefighters are at an increased risk for certain types of cancer due to their exposure to toxic substances during fires. Unfortunately, rural communities often face the added challenge of limited access to healthcare services, including specialized cancer screenings. Ensuring that professional firefighters are provided with access to necessary cancer screenings without the financial barriers of copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles is vital to early detection, prevention, and improving health outcomes.

The Maryland Rural Health Association strongly believes that this bill will enhance the ability of firefighters, especially those in rural areas, to access life-saving preventive care. As healthcare access remains a challenge in rural areas, we recognize the importance of policies that reduce these barriers and ensure comprehensive health coverage. Professional firefighters in Maryland, including those in rural communities, will benefit tremendously from the provisions outlined in HB0459.

We urge you to support this bill and work towards its successful passage. By doing so, you will be helping to protect the health of the individuals who put their lives on the line every day to protect our communities.

On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
Jonathan Dayton, Executive Director

Reference:

Cancer Risk in Firefighters: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. (2019).