



House Bill 459

Health Insurance – Cancer Screening for Professional Firefighters – Required Coverage (James “Jimmy” Malone Act)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

Date: February 6, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 459 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill requires counties that employ career firefighters to provide coverage for preventive cancer screenings. HB 459 prohibits cost-sharing requirements such as copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles. Additionally, local governments subject to this requirement must ensure screenings align with the latest guidelines issued by the International Association of Fire Fighters. Counties fully support improving health and safety for firefighters and all employees and have already taken strides to offer extensive health coverage; however, as drafted, the bill imposes significant fiscal and operational challenges on local governments.

Many counties already provide firefighter cancer screenings, often relying on grant programs due to budget limitations. While the bill’s requirements align with aspirational practices, not every county program currently meets the precise mandates outlined. If implemented as drafted, individual affected counties estimate a \$1 million fiscal impact, which would strain local budgets without additional State assistance. **Counties urge the State to make this policy a funded mandate, rather than unfunded.**

MACo appreciates the State’s commitment to firefighter cancer screenings and supports efforts to expand access to these critical health services. To ensure successful implementation, MACo encourages the State to provide dedicated funding, allowing counties to administer the program as prescribed, without copayments for participants. To that end, MACo suggests an amendment directing State funding to support this mandate at the local level, ensuring consistency and long-term sustainability across all jurisdictions.

Counties have historically been and remain committed to firefighter health initiatives, including the Maryland Professional and Volunteer Firefighters Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies Program. Counties believe additional State resources should be allocated to expand this program, ensuring that all firefighters—career and volunteer—receive essential screenings without imposing unfunded mandates on local governments.

Counties appreciate the bill’s intent and recognize the importance of early cancer detection for first responders. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 459, incorporating state funding provisions to enable counties to meet these valuable public safety objectives.