



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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## **HB 459 - Health Insurance - Cancer Screening for Professional Firefighters - Required Coverage**

**(James "Jimmy" Malone Act)**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**February 6, 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 HB 459. 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, 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 cancer<sup>1</sup>, emphasizing the need for early detection and prevention.

HB 459 eliminates financial barriers to preventative cancer screenings for professional firefighters. This bill requires insurance carriers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to fully cover the costs of cancer screenings without imposing copayments, coinsurance or deductibles.

Firefighters dedicate their lives to protecting our communities and should not have to choose between their health and financial stability. Given the nature of their profession and its heightened risk, we have an opportunity to provide them with the best possible preventative care.

HB 459 works toward reducing firefighter cancer mortality and ensures they receive the medical attention they deserve. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 459.

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<sup>1</sup> "Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness Month." International Association of Fire Fighters. 2023.