



Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Members of the Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Allegany and Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association, we write to express our strong support for **SB0579 – Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters**, which would require counties to offer no-cost preventive cancer screenings to volunteer firefighters.

Volunteer firefighters face unique occupational hazards as a result of their service to our communities. Modern fires expose firefighters to a wide range of carcinogens released from burning synthetic materials, plastics, and household products. Even with improvements in protective equipment and decontamination practices, repeated exposure over the course of a firefighter’s service significantly increases the risk of developing several types of cancer. Research continues to show that cancer is one of the leading health threats facing the fire service today.

Preventive cancer screenings are a critical tool in protecting the long-term health of those who protect our communities. Early detection can significantly improve treatment outcomes, reduce long-term healthcare costs, and allow firefighters to continue serving their communities safely. Unfortunately, many volunteer firefighters do not have consistent access to comprehensive preventive screenings, particularly in rural areas where healthcare access may already be limited.

This issue is especially important in Western Maryland. In rural counties such as Allegany and Garrett, the fire and rescue system relies overwhelmingly on volunteer personnel. These men and women donate countless hours to training, emergency response, and community protection—often without any form of compensation. They willingly place themselves in dangerous and unpredictable situations to protect the lives and property of others.

Providing no-cost preventive cancer screenings is a meaningful way to support the individuals who selflessly give their time, energy, and skills to serve their neighbors. Ensuring access to these screenings recognizes the real health risks associated with firefighting and demonstrates our commitment to protecting those who protect us.

This legislation represents an important step forward in addressing the growing concern of occupational cancer within the fire service and in supporting the volunteer firefighters who make emergency response possible in many Maryland communities.

The Allegany and Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association respectfully urges the Senate Finance Committee to give this legislation a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maryland's fire and rescue service.

Sincerely,

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