

SB579 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Dale Bowen

Position: FAV

MARYLAND STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

*Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel
-a 501(c)3 Organization*



Legislative Committee

Dale Bowen

Email: dbowen@msfa.org

Cell: 410-610-5045

March 6, 2025

SB 579 – Counties – No-Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters

The Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA) wishes to present testimony in support of **Senate Bill 579 – Counties – No-Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters.**

The MSFA fully supports this legislation. Cancer remains one of the leading causes of death within the fire service community. Early detection through regular preventive screenings greatly improves long-term outcomes and survival rates for firefighters.

The State currently provides a cancer screening fund and grant program intended to help pay for cancer screenings for members of the fire service community. Unfortunately, volunteer fire departments have experienced significant challenges accessing this program. These difficulties have resulted in only one volunteer fire company receiving a grant during the past two application cycles. We are currently awaiting the results of the third grant cycle.

Senate Bill 579 would shift responsibility to local governments to provide these cancer screenings while allowing counties to apply for reimbursement through the State's cancer screening fund. This approach would streamline the process and greatly improve participation among volunteer fire departments in this critical preventive health program.

Providing consistent and accessible cancer screening for firefighters is an essential step toward protecting the health and safety of those who dedicate their lives to protecting our communities.

For these reasons, the MSFA respectfully requests a **favorable report on SB 579**.

Sincerely,

Dale Bowen

MSFA Legislative Committee

SB0579 – Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Scre

Uploaded by: Jonathan Dayton

Position: FAV



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,

Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE
Vice President, Allegany Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association
agcvfrarecruitment@gmail.com

Letter of Support for SB0579.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE MCKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 416
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3565
800-492-7122 Ext. 3565
Mike.McKay@senate.maryland.gov

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

Cumberland Office
100N Mechanic Street
Cumberland, Maryland 21502
240-362-7040

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Joint Committees
Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review
Children, Youth, and Families
Program Open Space and Agricultural
Land Preservation

Williamsport Office
2N Conococheque Street
Williamsport Town Hall
Williamsport, Maryland

March 6, 2026

RE: Fire/EMS Coalition Support for SB0579

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

The Fire/EMS Coalition would like to express their support for **Senate Bill 579: Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters**. This bill will require counties in which a volunteer fire company is located to offer no-cost preventive cancer screenings in accordance with certain guidelines to volunteer firefighters volunteering with the volunteer fire company; authorizing a county to satisfy the requirement by providing a certain annual examination or applying for a certain grant; requiring the volunteer fire companies to maintain and provide to the counties in which the companies are located a certain list of volunteer firefighters; etc.

The Fire/EMS Coalition supports Senate Bill 579.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mike McKay'.

Senator Mike McKay
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland
Serving Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

Voting Organizations:

Maryland Fire Chief's Association (MFCA)
Maryland State Firefighter's Association (MSFA)
State Fire Marshal (OSFM)
Maryland Fire Rescue Institute (MFRI)
Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMMS)
Metro Fire Chief's Association
Professional Firefighters of Maryland

Our Mission Statement

The Maryland Fire/EMS Coalition unites Republicans and Democrats in support of fire/emergency services legislation that benefit all first responders. Becoming a member does not require taking positions on legislation; rather Coalition members are asked to offer support in a way that best benefits fire/emergency services in their respective Legislative Districts.

Testimony in support of SB0579 - Cancer Screenings

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

03/10/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz Frederick,
MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0579- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters

TO: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0579, **Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters**

This bill is personally important to me as my daughter-in-law is a firefighter. This bill will protect our first responders throughout Maryland in jurisdictions not yet covering this for their firefighters.

Statistics quoted in the Cobb County (GA) Government report *Firefighters & Cancer: A hidden danger in Public Safety*¹ discussed *The Link Between Firefighting and Cancer*

Firefighters are regularly exposed to toxic chemicals, hazardous smoke, and carcinogens. When buildings burn, they release harmful substances like benzene, formaldehyde, and asbestos—all known to cause cancer. Even after the fire is out, dangerous contaminants can linger on their gear, leading to prolonged exposure. The U.S. Fire Administration reports that firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer than the general population ([USFA](#)).

In 2023, the International Association of Fire Fighters found that 72% of line-of-duty deaths among its members were caused by occupational cancer ([IAFF](#)).

Firefighters have an elevated risk for several types of cancer, including:

- Lung cancer from inhaling hazardous smoke
- Leukemia and lymphoma due to exposure to toxic chemicals
- Skin cancer from UV exposure and contact with contaminated materials
- Digestive cancers from ingesting toxins absorbed through gear or skin

For comparison, the cancer incidence rate for the U.S. general population is 440.5 per 100,000 men and women per year, with a cancer death rate of 146.0 per 100,000 ([Cancer.gov](#)).

This bill recognizes the dangers our firefighters face and will require counties in which a volunteer fire company is located to offer no-cost preventive cancer screenings in accordance with certain guidelines to volunteer firefighters volunteering with the volunteer fire company; authorizing a county to satisfy the requirement by providing a certain annual examination or applying for a certain grant; requiring the volunteer fire companies to maintain and provide to the counties in which the companies are located a certain list of volunteer firefighters; etc.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0579.

¹ <https://www.cobbcounty.gov/news/firefighters-cancer-hidden-danger-public-safety>

SB 579 - Counties - No-Cost Preventive Cancer Scre

Uploaded by: Robert Cassilly

Position: FAV

ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 579 - Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings
for Volunteer Firefighters

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I write to express our support for Senate Bill 579 in recognition of the physical toll and long-term health risks associated with the selfless service of volunteer firefighters, particularly the heightened risk of occupational cancer faced by those who serve on the front lines of emergency response.

Volunteer firefighters are the backbone of emergency services in many Maryland communities, including Harford County. These men and women place themselves in harm's way to protect the lives and property of others, often exposing themselves to dangerous toxins and carcinogens in the process. The long-term health consequences of that service are increasingly well documented, and it is essential that we take meaningful steps to address them.

Earlier in 2026, Harford County and the Cassilly Administration were proud to announce a new health initiative: the Volunteer Firefighter Cancer Screening Program. Understanding that early detection is the most effective tool in saving lives, this initiative will provide free preventative screenings for a range of occupational cancers, ensuring that financial barriers never stand in the way of a volunteer firefighter receiving critical medical screening and care.

Our volunteers answer the call on our community's worst days. It is our moral obligation to ensure that we are looking out for their health long after the fire is out. By providing access to preventative screenings and encouraging early detection, we can better protect the long-term health of the individuals who dedicate themselves to protecting our communities.

Harford County Celebrates 250 Years ~ 1773-2023

410.638.3350 | 410.879.2000 | 220 South Main Street, Bel Air, Maryland 21014 | www.harfordcountymd.gov

The Honorable Pamela Beidle

March 6, 2026

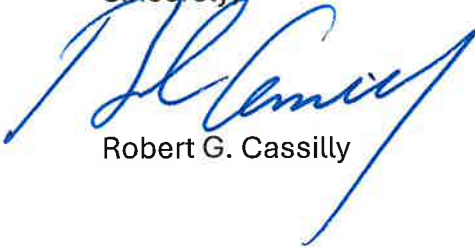
Page 2

Harford County believes that supporting the health and well-being of our volunteer firefighters is not only the right thing to do, it is essential to sustaining the emergency response system that so many Maryland communities rely upon. Senate Bill 579 represents an important step in recognizing the risks these volunteers face and ensuring that they receive the support they deserve.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 579.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cassilly", is written over the word "Sincerely,". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Robert G. Cassilly

SB579 – Counties – Cancer Screenings for Voluntee

Uploaded by: Kathryn Feeley

Position: UNF



March 6, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 579 – Counties – No–Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (Cancer Council) supports expanding access to evidence-based cancer prevention and screening services for Maryland’s volunteer firefighters, who face elevated cancer risk due to occupational exposures. However, the Council has serious concerns with Senate Bill 579 (SB 579) because it would permit the use of unproven multi-cancer early detection (MCED) blood tests as part of a mandated, publicly funded screening program.

Premature Adoption of Unproven Technologies

MCED tests are an emerging category of blood-based assays that detect cancer-associated biomarkers but do not diagnose cancer. At present, **no MCED test has received FDA approval, and none have demonstrated a reduction in cancer-specific mortality or overall mortality in randomized clinical trials.** While some tests have shown an ability to detect cancer signals, detection alone does not equate to improved health outcomes.

Importantly, there are **more than 30 MCED tests currently in development**, and some are already being marketed through regulatory pathways that do not require FDA premarket approval. Commercial availability should not be mistaken for clinical effectiveness or safety. MCED tests also vary widely in their underlying biological approaches (e.g., circulating tumor DNA, protein biomarkers, or combinations of both), resulting in inconsistent performance characteristics and further uncertainty regarding their appropriateness for population-level screening.

Potential Harms and Risks of Multi-Cancer Early Detection Test

Premature adoption of MCED tests presents meaningful risks. False-positive results may lead to unnecessary imaging, invasive procedures, anxiety, and downstream costs. False-negative results may provide false reassurance and delay appropriate, evidence-based screening. These harms are especially concerning in the absence of clear clinical pathways, consensus guidelines, or demonstrated benefit.



Financial Risk and Equity Concerns

SB 579 would place counties in the position of financing follow-up diagnostic testing and care for results generated by unproven screening technologies. This could divert limited public resources away from interventions with established benefit, such as colorectal, lung, breast, and cervical cancer screening. Moreover, unequal county capacity to absorb these costs may exacerbate geographic and socioeconomic inequities across Maryland. Taken together, these concerns raise serious questions about the appropriateness of mandating or publicly funding MCED testing at this time.

Council Recommendation

The Council supports policies that expand access to **proven, guideline-recommended cancer screening and prevention services** for firefighters. However, SB 579 would prematurely legitimize unvalidated technologies, expose individuals to potential harm, and create financial and equity risks without demonstrated public health benefit.

For these reasons, the Maryland State Council on Cancer Control respectfully recommends that the Committee **reject SB 579** or substantially amend the bill to exclude coverage of MCED tests until they are FDA-approved and supported by robust evidence demonstrating improved health outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taofeek Owonikoko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "O".

Taofeek Owonikoko, MD
Chair
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control

SB0579-FIN_MACo_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Karrington Anderson

Position: INFO



Senate Bill 579

Counties – No-Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer Firefighters

MACo Position: **LETTER OF
INFORMATION**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 10, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) offers this **LETTER OF INFORMATION** on SB 579. This bill mandates that counties provide no-cost preventive cancer screenings to each firefighter who volunteers with a volunteer fire company. Screenings must align with the latest guidelines issued by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). Counties may satisfy this requirement by either providing a no-cost annual examination that includes preventive cancer screenings consistent with IAFF guidelines or by applying for the Innovative Cancer Screening Technologies grant.

Counties recognize the elevated cancer risks associated with firefighting and strongly value efforts to expand early detection services. Volunteer firefighters serve an essential public safety role in Maryland communities, and many counties already support access to cancer screening initiatives through local programs or State-supported grant opportunities.

At the same time, this bill establishes a mandated county responsibility. While the option to apply for grant funding provides flexibility, grant funding is not guaranteed and may not fully offset costs in jurisdictions with large volunteer fire companies.

Counties also suggest clarifying the definition of “volunteer firefighter” to ensure the no-cost screenings mandate is appropriately targeted to individuals with the highest occupational exposure risk. As drafted, the definition includes any individual volunteering with a volunteer fire company, which may encompass members who serve in administrative, support, or auxiliary roles and who are not regularly exposed to fire suppression environments. Narrowing the definition to individuals who are actively involved in fire suppression operations would better align the screening requirement with the intent of the bill—to address cancer risks associated with direct firefighting activities. This clarification would help ensure that limited program resources are directed toward those volunteers most likely to experience occupational exposure while also providing counties with clearer guidance for program administration and helping to ensure the scope of the mandate remains fiscally manageable.

Counties respectfully offer these considerations to assist the Committee in evaluating the bill’s fiscal and operational impacts at the local level. Ensuring clarity around funding availability, program administration, and long-term sustainability will be important to support successful implementation across all jurisdictions.

MACo appreciates the opportunity to provide this **LETTER OF INFORMATION** and looks forward to continued collaboration on policies that protect the health and safety of Maryland’s volunteer firefighters (*a suggested amendment follows on the next page*).

MACo Amendment to SB 579:

- On page 2, in line 2, after "COUNTY" insert "**AND IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN FIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS**".