



January 26, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Wells
Chair, Government Operations and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 86 – State and Local Employees – Cancer Screening – Paid Leave

Dear Chair Wells:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (Council) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 86 (HB 86), which would provide paid leave for certain state and local government employees to obtain recommended cancer screenings. This legislation represents a practical and impactful initial step toward promoting employee health and well-being while reinforcing Maryland's commitment to cancer prevention and early detection.

Investing in Employee Health and Well-being:

As a leader in public health, the State of Maryland should continue to lead by example in prioritizing preventive care. Providing dedicated paid leave for cancer screenings is a direct investment in the health and well-being of public sector employees at both the state and local levels. Early detection of cancer significantly improves survival rates, expands treatment options, and can reduce long-term health care costs. By allowing employees paid time to complete recommended screenings, HB 86 helps remove financial and workplace barriers that too often delay preventive care.

Creating a Culture of Health and Engagement:

Paid cancer screening leave supports a culture of health, wellness, and prevention across public service. This policy signals that Maryland values its workforce and recognizes the importance of enabling employees to care for their health without fear of lost wages or workplace repercussions. Healthier employees are more engaged, experience fewer preventable health crises, and contribute to improved productivity and organizational stability across state and local government.

Economic and Public Health Benefits:

Preventive care, including routine cancer screening, is a sound economic and public health investment. Detecting cancer earlier can reduce the need for more intensive and costly treatment associated with later-stage diagnoses. Additionally, expanding access to screening through workplace policies helps advance health equity by ensuring that public employees across jurisdictions have consistent opportunities to prioritize preventive care.



Leading by Example:

Neighboring states like Virginia and Delaware have already recognized the importance of this benefit. Maryland has the opportunity to join them in setting a new standard for employee well-being and responsible healthcare practices.

The Council urges the Government Operations and Elections Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 86. By supporting paid leave for cancer screening, Maryland strengthens its commitment to prevention, supports a healthier public workforce, and continues to demonstrate leadership in cancer control and public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taofeek Owonikoko".

Taofeek Owonikoko, MD
Chair
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control