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HB0086

January 27, 2025

TO: Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of the Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 86 – State and Local Employees - Cancer Screening - Paid Leave
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 86.

HB 86 allows local government employees and all state employees – including part-time and temporary state employees – to take up to four hours of paid cancer screening leave during a 12-month period, as long as they receive approval from the appropriate authority. This bill was modeled after Baltimore City's Employee Cancer Screening Program, which has allowed permanent full- and part-time City employees these same permissions for nearly two decades.ⁱ Timely routine cancer screenings are important for detecting cancer and precancerous cells early, allowing for prompt treatment that helps save lives.ⁱⁱ

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Maryland (second to heart disease). Baltimore City's cancer screening program for employees supports our residents in receiving important preventive care and living longer, healthier lives. This bill will enable the government workforce statewide to do the same.

How Baltimore City's Program Works:

The City's Office of the Labor Commissioner (OLC) is responsible for administering the Program. The OLC may track these trends to assess the impact of the program and determine whether any policy adjustments are needed to improve its effectiveness.

To request leave for cancer screening, employees must obtain prior approval from their supervisor before taking time off. They are required to submit a "Request for Time Off Form" as soon as their appointment is scheduled to allow the agency to ensure adequate coverage. After completing the screening, employees must provide their supervisor with a "Cancer Screening Program Certification Form," which is completed by the physician or medical facility conducting the screening. The supervisor verifies the screening and submits the certification form to the agency's Human Resources/Personnel Office for record-keeping.

This process ensures that Permission Time is properly documented for payroll processing while maintaining confidentiality in personnel records.

The time is not deducted from an employee's accrued leave balance, such as sick, vacation, or personal leave. If the screening appointment requires more than four hours, the additional time must be charged to the employee's accrued leave.

Benefits to Employees and the City:

The Program provides significant advantages to both employees and the City of Baltimore. By allowing employees to take paid leave for cancer screenings, the City actively supports preventive healthcare, which can lead to early detection and better health outcomes. Employees who take advantage of this program can identify potential health concerns before they become serious, increasing their chances of successful treatment and long-term well-being.

The Program removes financial and work-related barriers to seeking medical care. Rather than having to use their accrued leave or forego necessary screenings, employees can access preventive healthcare without concern for lost wages or scheduling conflicts. This not only reduces stress but also promotes a healthier and more engaged workforce, leading to higher morale and greater job satisfaction.

For the City, encouraging preventive care through paid cancer screening leave helps reduce long-term healthcare costs. Early detection of cancer can lead to lower medical expenses by preventing the need for costly late-stage treatments. Additionally, a workforce that prioritizes health is less likely to experience prolonged medical absences, which can lead to increased productivity and operational efficiency. Employees who maintain their health are more consistent in their attendance, reducing disruptions and ensuring that City services continue to function effectively.

Baltimore City's Program is a strategic initiative designed to enhance employee health, lower healthcare costs, and improve workforce productivity. By eliminating barriers to preventive care, the City supports its employees in prioritizing their health while ensuring that municipal operations benefit from a healthier, more engaged workforce. This initiative represents a balanced approach that benefits both employees and the City by fostering a workplace culture that values well-being, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

The BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 86.

ⁱ Baltimore City. (2018). Administrative Manual AM 203-4-1. Retrieved from <https://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/upload/AM-203-4-1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Ma Z, Richardson LC. Cancer Screening Prevalence and Associated Factors Among US Adults. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2022;19:220063. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd19.220063>