



## Senate Bill 579

### *Counties – No-Cost Preventive Cancer Screenings for Volunteer and Retired Volunteer Firefighters*

MACo Position: **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

To: Health Committee

Date: March 31, 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 appreciate the bill sponsor 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 originally drafted, the definition included any individual volunteering with a volunteer fire company, which may have encompassed 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 better aligns the screening requirement with the intent of the bill: to address cancer risks associated with direct firefighting activities. The clarification helps 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.

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.