



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**".