



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Health and Government Operations

Chair: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

February 26, 2024

House Bill 0965: Maryland Department of Health - Breast Cancer Program - Eligibility and Public Awareness Campaign

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 0965: Maryland Department of Health - Breast Cancer Program - Eligibility and Public Awareness Campaign

Aside from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common type of cancers women face today. Claiming 30% of new cancer cases a year, breast cancer is also the second leading cause of cancer death among women. Although breast cancer deaths have been trending down, the incidence rate has slowly been increasing each year (American Cancer Society, 2024). One explanation for the increase in incidence could be attributed to better screening and early diagnosis, which can also explain the downward trend in mortality from breast cancer. In order to continue to reduce mortality, Maryland needs to ensure that they are providing proper and thorough screening to anyone at risk. Currently, breast cancer screening is widely available to Maryland residents who are between the ages of 40-64. Although that is the ideal screening age range as recommended by the American Cancer Society, it excludes those who are at a higher risk. According to the nonprofit organization Breastcancer.org, about 5%-10% of breast cancers can be linked to a genetic mutation that can be inherited from either parent. Furthermore, 15% of all breast cancer patients had a family member who was also diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their life (2023). These risk factors are nonmodifiable and are not ones to develop with age. With that being said, those who are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer should not wait until they are 40 to get screened. The American Cancer Society recommends that anyone who is considered to be at high risk should receive a breast MRI and mammogram once a year beginning at the age of 30 (2024). With the passing of HB0965, Maryland residents who are at a higher risk will also have access to proper screening, which results in early detection and can improve prognostics. In addition to the alteration in eligibility requirements, the Maryland Rural Health Association is also in favor of the development and implementation of a public awareness campaign as education is a primary level of prevention that can further aid in the reduction of mortality from breast cancer and empower Maryland residents with the proper knowledge to take control of their health.

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director
jdayton@mdruralhealth.org*