



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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March 5, 2024

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Chairwoman Joseline Peña-Melnyk,  
241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports **House Bill 1293** - Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention, which addresses the persistent health disparities impacting communities disproportionately affected by prostate, lung, and breast cancer in Maryland. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

As we are all aware, cancer continues to be a significant public health concern, with breast cancer ranking as the most diagnosed cancer in Maryland in 2017. Prostate cancer follows as the second most diagnosed, and lung cancer stands as the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the state, with breast cancer being the third leading cause of cancer death.

House Bill 1293 is a vital initiative aimed at developing and implementing a comprehensive public education campaign to address the factors contributing to health disparities in communities impacted by these cancers. This bill recognizes the multifaceted nature of these disparities, considering elements such as poverty, socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, social injustice, and racial bias.

Public education campaigns have proven instrumental in dispelling myths surrounding cancer and promoting knowledge that can lead to more positive outcomes. By providing information on the onset, types, and multifactorial issues related to prostate, lung, and breast cancer, we can empower communities to make informed decisions about their health.

The testimony of Dr. Arthur Burnett from Johns Hopkins University emphasizes the disproportionate impact of prostate cancer on Black men. A public education campaign, as proposed by this legislation, would enhance access to comprehensive evaluations and consultations, ultimately benefiting populations disproportionately affected by this condition.

The American Lung Association's insights on lung cancer in Maryland underscore the need for increased awareness and equitable distribution of information. House Bill 1293 aligns with the Association's call to action, recognizing that Maryland ranks 36th in the nation for lung cancer screening.

The bill seeks to improve these statistics, ensuring that all communities have access to vital information and resources.

Breast cancer, particularly affecting African American women as the second leading cause of cancer, requires focused attention. Public education campaigns can bridge knowledge gaps, especially regarding the elevated risks associated with life stressors, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and breastfeeding disparities. House Bill 1293 is a proactive step toward addressing these issues. A well-executed public campaign allows for collaboration among various agencies, including health providers, social service organizations, and community groups. This collaborative effort can bring together a wealth of resources, making information, programs, and support accessible to underserved populations.

House Bill 1293 is a commendable effort to address the complexities surrounding prostate, lung, and breast cancer disparities in Maryland. The proposed public education campaign has the potential to save lives, enhance access to crucial resources, and improve overall outcomes for individuals facing these challenging diagnoses. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports **House Bill 1293** and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland