

# CANCER NATION



# CANCER POLICY & ADVOCACY TEAM

2025 CPAT SYMPOSIUM & HILL DAY

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## CANCER POLICY & ADVOCACY TEAM (CPAT) SYMPOSIUM

June 25-27, 2025 | Washington, DC

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The 2025 Cancer Policy & Advocacy Team (CPAT) Symposium brought together nearly 120 people from across Cancer Nation—survivors, caregivers, medical and nonprofit leaders, and students—united by one goal: to make cancer care better for everyone. We were honored to once again welcome the rising second-year medical students from the CUPID Program (Cancer in the Under Privileged, Indigent, or Disadvantaged) at Johns Hopkins and Indiana Universities. CUPID students have joined us every year since 2016, and the experience continues to change how they see cancer care and the people behind it. Our CPAT members take deep pride in helping shape the next generation of medical professionals who will carry forward the values of whole person care.



The CPAT Symposium brings advocates together to strengthen their voices in public policy and push for change that truly serves survivors. Over three days, we dig into how policy, care, and community intersect to shape our lives. On the final day, CPAT members hear directly from leading voices in survivorship and take home the tools to spark change in their own communities.

There's always laughter. There are tears. But most of all, there's solidarity, a shared belief that our stories and our advocacy can change the system. The energy this year was electric, and those who've been with us before say it only gets more powerful each time.

We are Cancer Nation. And when we come together, we are heard.

**Read on for highlights from the sessions...**

**We are Cancer Nation.  
And we are here to be heard!**

# SHARING ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Kara Kenan, Michele Nadeem-Baker, Jace Yawnick

Kara Kenan, Cancer Nation's Marketing and Communications Manager presented a comprehensive guide to leveraging social media for cancer advocacy with advocates, Michele Nadeem-Baker and Jace Yawnick. They outlined strategies for choosing the right platform, crafting impactful content with clarity, emotion, and visuals, and engaging audiences through consistency and collaboration. Advocates showcased how they engage online, communicate their personal stories and share resources. The presentation concluded with practical tips, dos and don'ts, and a call to action for CPAT attendees to post, connect, and share their advocacy experiences using the provided social media toolkit.



# HILL DAY PREPARATION

Shelley Fuld Nasso, MPP, Andrea Hans, Debbie Curtis, Una Lee

Shelley Fuld Nasso, MPP, NCCS CEO, and Andrea Hans, Public Policy Manager were joined by Debbie Curtis of McDermott + Consulting and Una Lee, Chief Counsel for the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Health Subcommittee. Bringing their experiences working on Capitol Hill and sharing their insights on advancing goals in Congress; panel discussions included the current legislative landscape and offered advocates practical strategies for engaging with staffers and members of Congress during their Hill Day meetings.

# WRITING MEDICINE WORKSHOP

Laurel Braitman, PhD

Dr. Laurel Braitman's writing medicine workshop was a deeply moving exploration of storytelling as a tool for healing, advocacy, and connection. Drawing from her personal experiences as a "co-survivor" of cancer through her father's and mother's journeys, she shared how grief, loss, and resilience shaped her life and inspired her work. Through interactive writing exercises, she encouraged participants to use metaphor, sensory detail, and vulnerability to express complex emotions like joy, grief, and the cancer experience. Attendees created powerful poetic reflections and imagined transformative classes or messages to houseplants as metaphors for life and survival. Dr. Braitman emphasized that storytelling is a public health tool and a means to humanize data, urging participants to share their voices through writing, advocacy, and creative expression. Her session celebrated the power of personal narrative to foster empathy, inspire change, and find meaning in life's most difficult moments.



# HOPE HEALS: REIGNITING PURPOSE AND PEACE IN THE JOURNEY OF ADVOCACY

Dr. L. Imani Price

Dr. L. Imani Price's keynote centered on resilience, healing, and the power of hope in the face of adversity, particularly within the cancer community. A licensed clinical psychologist and Army veteran, Dr. Price shared her personal journey inspired by her grandmother's diagnosis of breast cancer and the transformative role of prayer and spirituality in healing. She introduced her "HOPE" Protocol; a framework emphasizing Higher power, Overcoming negativity, Perseverance, and Empowerment. She invited participants to create their own personalized versions. Through grounding exercises, storytelling, and interactive reflection, she encouraged attendees to prioritize self-care, honor their voices, and remain hopeful even amid discouraging advocacy outcomes. The session highlighted the importance of integrating spirituality into mental health and medical care, fostering community, and finding strength through connection, purpose, and authenticity.



## UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

Claire C. Conley, PhD, Karen Archer, LCSW, OSW-C, Lindsey Wamsley, LPC-S

Claire C. Conley, PhD from Georgetown University joined Karen Archer, LCSW, OSW-C and Lindsey Wamsley, LPC-S from the Inova Health Life with Cancer Program to discuss the emotional, psychological, and practical challenges faced by caregivers in the cancer community. Panelists shared personal stories of caregiving through cancer diagnoses, emphasizing the importance of support systems, communication, and self-care. They introduced practical tools like assertive communication strategies and emphasized the need for caregivers to prioritize their own well-being to better support loved ones. The session also addressed anticipatory grief, the emotional toll of caregiving, and the power of legacy-making.

# HILL DAY 2025 | JUNE 26, 2025, WASHINGTON, DC

On June 26, 2025, CPAT members met with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to urge Congress to **protect Medicaid and protect cancer research**.

**Meetings at a Glance:** 102 congressional meetings with 95 attendees from 24 states, including 47 Senate and 55 House meetings across 63 Democratic and 39 Republican offices.

## Protecting Medicaid

Medicaid covers more than 70 million Americans, including millions with cancer. It ensures timely screening, treatment, and supportive care—and for many, it is truly lifesaving.

### Our ask to Congress:

- Oppose Medicaid work reporting requirements that strip coverage and create harmful red tape.
- Protect provider funding and rural health systems.
- Preserve Medicaid as a lifeline for vulnerable patients.

## Protecting Cancer Research

The FY 2026 budget proposal would slash NIH funding from \$48 billion to \$27.9 billion, cutting 43% of research grants—1,800 fewer new projects. It would eliminate promising research, consolidate institutes, cap indirect costs, and reduce internal research by \$1.3 billion.

### What's at stake:

NIH-funded research drives breakthroughs in treatment, prevention, and survivorship, supports nearly 408,000 jobs, and generates \$94.58 billion in economic activity.

### Our ask to Congress:

- Reject NIH budget cuts and institute consolidations.
- Maintain U.S. leadership in research.
- Restore canceled grants.

CPAT members received training and used personal stories to show lawmakers why protecting Medicaid and research is essential for patients and families.



# IN THEIR WORDS

## ADRIENNE JOHNSON



Standing alongside so many fearless survivors reminded me that our voices carry real power. As someone who lives the realities of survivorship every day, CPAT gave me deeper knowledge, more confidence, and a stronger sense of responsibility to speak up. I left feeling **more empowered, more engaged, and more committed to improving care** for every person touched by cancer.

## BRANDON HERTZENDORF



Before CPAT, I had no idea how to advocate for policies that shape survivorship. Now I feel ready; not just to speak up, but to help others do the same. Meeting survivors, future doctors, and longtime advocates showed me I'm not alone in this work. CPAT gave me **knowledge, community, and real hope for what we can change together.**

## OLIVIA BURZONI



Advocating on the Hill meant carrying not just my voice, but my father's. Losing him in August made this experience even more meaningful. Sharing his story, and knowing it might inspire others the way he inspired me, reminded me why our voices matter. This opportunity helped me feel **connected, seen, and part of something bigger.**



**WE NEED  
A CURE  
FOR CARE**



**CANCER  
NATION**

Learn more: [www.WeAreCancerNation.org](http://www.WeAreCancerNation.org)  
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