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## **What They Are Saying**

### **Cancer Connect Collaborative Calls for Florida Cancer Centers to Collect Recurrence Data**

*Florida becomes first state in the nation to collect population-level data on cancer recurrence*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** — Last week, First Lady Casey DeSantis announced that Florida will be the first state in the nation to collect cancer recurrence data – the Cancer Connect Collaborative’s first action to remove data access barriers for easy and timely research. While a survivor is in remission, the same or a different cancer may recur, called a cancer recurrence. It is essential to use cancer recurrence in research to adapt our understanding of the illness, improve cancer care, and inform treatment decisions.

The Agency for Health Care Administration and Florida Department of Health have contacted all statutorily required reporting facilities to receive additional patient outcome data from hospitals statewide, specifically in regards to remission, disease progression, and recurrence. To view the letters, click [here](#).

*Here is what health care professionals are saying:*

**Tampa General Hospital President and CEO John Couris, said,** “We are grateful to have such a champion in First Lady Casey DeSantis to lead the fight against cancer. Because of her leadership, Florida will be the first in the nation to bring top tier cancer institutions together to collect and analyze data, and inform how we provide the best quality care to our patients. Tampa General Hospital is committed to working with the First Lady and our partners in the medical community to put an end to cancer, along with the death and devastation it inflicts on so many Florida families.”

**Baptist Health Cancer Care of Miami CEO Dr. Michael Zinner, said,** “We commend First Lady DeSantis on the establishment of the Cancer Connect Collaborative to break down longstanding silos between researchers, cancer facilities, and medical providers to improve cancer research and treatment. Information sharing is one of the fundamental aspects in ensuring effective care, and collaborating on groundbreaking new cancer treatments will continue to improve outcomes for patients. As one of the largest cancer programs in the state, at Miami Cancer Institute and Lynn Cancer Institute, we are at the

forefront of many of these innovations here in Florida. We appreciate First Lady DeSantis' commitment to research and to better care and treatment standards for our state."

**Director of the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Health System Stephen Nimer, said,** "We heartily applaud the First Lady and the Governor for prioritizing the optimization of care for cancer patients throughout our incredible state of Florida. Being the first state in the nation to collect cancer recurrence data will serve as a key driver of change and will improve the health of all cancer patients and survivors living in Florida. The initiatives that the First Lady has laid out ensure effective collaboration between institutions and all who are committed to finding new cancer cures. We are proud to be part of a shining example for the nation in these efforts."

**Moffitt Cancer Center Vice President, Chief Data Officer and Associate Center Director of Data Science, Dr. Dana Rollison, said,** "We applaud First Lady Casey DeSantis and the Florida Cancer Connect Collaborative for highlighting the important role of cancer data quality and accessibility. Understanding patterns of cancer recurrence among Floridians enables researchers to identify new ways of preventing and treating these cancers. As Florida's legislatively created cancer center, we look forward to working with First Lady Casey DeSantis, the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Florida Department of Health on leveraging data for the improvement of cancer patient outcomes across the state."

**Director of Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center Florida Roxana Dronca, M.D. said,** "On behalf of the cancer patients we serve from across the State of Florida and those we bring to our Florida campus from across the nation, Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center - Florida is honored to support and participate in the Florida Cancer Connect Collaborative. Collecting population-level data on cancer recurrence will allow us to assess the effectiveness of various cancer treatments, examine outcomes and prognosis, and give physicians and researchers new tools to understand what works best for our patients and elevates the quality of cancer care for all Floridians. This is an important step for the Florida Cancer Connect Collaborative and will position Florida at the forefront of cancer research and care."

**UF Health Cancer Center Director Dr. Jonathan Licht, said,** "We commend the first lady's commitment to improving health outcomes for cancer patients in the state of Florida and beyond. Creating a repository of cases of recurrent cancer will be of tremendous value as we look to provide patients with the best possible care. We look forward to supporting the First Lady's efforts to tackle this major health issue, and to collaborating with our colleagues throughout the state."

**Baptist Health Medical Center Jacksonville President & CEO Michael A. Mayo, said,** "Reimagining and advancing cancer care in Florida is exactly what we are about at Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center in Jacksonville. Leveraging real-time data to enhance clinical care should always be our goal to bring results, recovery, and a better quality of life for cancer patients. The First Lady's commitment for supporting cancer research will yield significant results for patients."

**Assistant Professor of Surgery, Division of Plastic Surgery, University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine Dr. Nicholas J. Panetta, said,** “The Florida Cancer Connect Collaborative represents a unique opportunity to embark on a novel initiative, defining a new vision for cancer care in Florida. Where barriers to progress have historically resulted in unrealized potential, the collaborative aims to implement a more nimble, transparent, and data driven approach to cancer care with a focus on efficient resource utilization and innovation. With the clear goal of optimizing the broad scope of cancer care for all Floridians, I believe work by the collaborative will establish the cancer care benchmark by which other states will be measured.”

**President & CEO of the Florida Hospital Association Mary C. Mayhew, said,** “The Florida Hospital Association applauds First Lady Casey DeSantis for breaking down barriers and bringing together the best researchers and the brightest minds to determine how we as a state can win more battles against cancer. Florida hospitals will add great value to the Florida Cancer Connect Collaborative and put forth data, observations and solutions that will have a meaningful impact on cancer patients across the state, nation and around the world. FHA is grateful that the First Lady is leading the charge and securing Florida’s place as the leader in innovation in the fight against cancer.”

**Medical Director of Ackerman Cancer Center Dr. Scot Ackerman, said,** “Florida’s commitment to collecting cancer recurrence data on a statewide scale marks a critical milestone in cancer research and care. This historic initiative will undoubtedly lead to better treatment options and improved outcomes for cancer patients in Florida and beyond.”

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