

Heather Cutler Foundation Files Petition, Seeks Public Support for Pancreatic Cancer Reforms

Asks for transparency and oversight in drug approvals, highlights disparities in trial access and care between Ontario, Quebec, AB, BC, and the rest of Canada.

MOUNT PEARL, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA, October 24, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Heather Cutler Foundation](#) this week submitted petition e-5186 to the House of Commons, formally advancing its call to address critical gaps in Canada's pancreatic cancer treatment and care. The petition, currently featured on Change.org under the title "[Ensuring Canada's Commitment to Increasing Pancreatic Survival Rates](#)," is now pending authorization by Health Minister Mark Holland. It seeks to improve survival rates for one of Canada's deadliest cancers by advocating for streamlined access to treatments, greater availability of clinical trials, and the establishment of national guidelines, including somatic testing.



Heather Cutler, a nurse who served her community in Newfoundland for over 35 years, passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2024. Her experience with systemic healthcare challenges now guides the foundation's efforts to improve access to care nationwide.

A key ask in the petition is the implementation of a unified national framework that includes both genetic and somatic testing to improve patient outcomes by matching individuals with targeted therapies and clinical trials based on their tumors' molecular profiles. The foundation also emphasizes the availability of free molecular profiling through PANCAN's "Know Your Tumor" program, which is accessible to Canadians, and advocates for similar support to be provided directly by the Canadian government.

These trials often rely on specific mutations or markers identified through somatic testing to determine eligibility. Without access to this testing, patients cannot enroll in trials, missing opportunities to benefit from innovative treatments that studies show can improve outcomes.

Further compounding the issue is that clinical trials focused on precision medicine for pancreatic cancer remain concentrated in major urban centers in Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario—leaving many Canadians, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, without access to potentially life-saving treatments.

Pancreatic cancer has a five-year survival rate of just 10% in Canada, a figure that has stagnated for two decades.

[The petition highlights these interprovincial disparities](#) and calls on the federal government to close the gaps by supporting frameworks like the Canadian Remote Access Framework for Clinical Trials (CRAFT) and Health Canada’s proposed clinical trial modernization, while also developing immediate strategies to provide access to those in urgent need.

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Many Canadians are facing the reality that their cancer outcomes are dictated by their postal code. Our petition pushes for timely treatment approvals and equity in cancer care.”

Christopher Cutler, Founder

“Despite advances that are happening in precision medicine, many Canadians are facing the reality that they’re living in a country where their outcomes are dictated by their postal code,” said Christopher Cutler, Founder of The Heather Cutler Foundation. “That’s why it’s so important for the Canadian government to commit to supporting existing initiatives like the CRAFT framework and Health Canada’s proposed modernization—but also to

develop immediate strategies for those who need solutions now. Our petition seeks to change that by pushing for timely approval of treatments and greater equity in cancer care across the country.”

The petition also addresses the delay in funding for critical drugs like Onivyde, a chemotherapy



Heather Cutler with her husband Barry, son Christopher, and daughter Bethany. (Photo copyright © The Heather Cutler Foundation, 2024)

treatment approved in other countries but inaccessible to many Canadians due to prolonged negotiations by the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA). The foundation calls for enhanced transparency in the drug approval process and a thorough review to identify and address inefficiencies, ensuring future treatment options are made available to Canadians without unnecessary delays.

Once approved, the petition will run for a period of 120 days.



Heather Cutler's brother, nephew, daughter, and son (Christopher Cutler, founder of The Heather Cutler Foundation) at the Kicking PancreAS fundraiser for Craig's Cause. The family raised just shy of \$10,000 in Heather's name, surpassing the previous year'

Call to Action

The Heather Cutler Foundation urges all Canadians to support the petition by continuing to share it on Change.org. Once the petition is authorized, the public will be able to sign it directly through the House of Commons e-petitions platform. The foundation remains dedicated to advocating for policies that ensure better access to pancreatic cancer treatment and improved survival rates across the country.

For more information on the petition, please visit <https://change.org/TeamHeather>.

About The Heather Cutler Foundation

The Heather Cutler Foundation was established in May 2024, following the passing of Heather Cutler, a dedicated nurse who devoted over 35 years to her community in Newfoundland. Known for her compassionate care, Heather faced a tragic battle with pancreatic cancer, a disease often diagnosed late and notoriously difficult to treat. Throughout her journey, she and her family encountered significant barriers in accessing essential somatic testing and clinical trials, highlighting the need for systemic change—particularly in underserved regions.

In her final wishes, Heather requested that donations be made to Craig's Cause in lieu of flowers, reflecting her commitment to raising awareness and improving treatment options. Following her passing, her son, Christopher Cutler, founded The Heather Cutler Foundation to honor her legacy and advocate for better care for pancreatic cancer patients. The foundation was officially incorporated on October 11, 2024.

Just days after its incorporation, the foundation filed petition e-5186, which is currently pending authorization in the House of Commons. This formal petition complements a related Change.org petition that has already gathered over 500 signatures, rallying support for closing gaps in pancreatic cancer care.

The foundation actively engages in fundraising and awareness campaigns through “Team Heather” initiatives, including the Kicking PancreAS event, organized by the national charity Craig’s Cause. Over the past two years, this event has raised a total of \$14,000—nearly \$10,000 of which was raised in the most recent year. These efforts have resulted in a research grant awarded in Heather’s name, reinforcing the foundation’s mission to improve pancreatic cancer care through advocacy.

The foundation’s core mission is to advocate for the establishment of national guidelines for genetic and somatic testing, expand access to clinical trials, and provide financial support for patients facing economic and geographic challenges.

The Heather Cutler Foundation continues to honor Heather’s legacy by working to bridge the gap between smaller provinces and urban centers, ensuring equitable access to cancer care across Canada. Through education, awareness campaigns, community engagement, and a focus on driving meaningful policy change, the foundation aims to create lasting improvements in cancer care and outcomes nationwide.

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