

# The cancer community will miss you Teddy

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Reams have been written in the past week about the death of Ted Kennedy, but little has focused on how important he has been to the cancer community.

From the beginning of discussions on the need to address cancer in the early '70s, Ted Kennedy has been there pushing for research dollars and understanding. This was before he became a survivor himself when his son Edward was diagnosed with a rare bone cancer that resulted in the loss of his leg while a teen.

Then in 2002, his daughter Kara, 42 and the mother of two, was diagnosed with lung cancer, and again he was faced with the same challenges as any parent of a child with cancer. It's true that he had the resources and visibility to find and engage the best, but I choose to see him as a model for many who have learned how to demand the best medicine for themselves and their loved ones -- and to never, never, never give up.

Over the years, Kennedy sponsored and co-sponsored numerous bills that have helped fund cancer research and provide better care for prevention and treatment. In addition to co-sponsoring the [Mammography Quality Standard Act in 1992](#) to set standards of safety and accuracy for mammography, he sponsored the [National Institutes of Health Revitalization Act of 1993](#).

In March 2009, he and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison introduced the [21st Century Cancer Access to Life Saving Early Detection, Research and Treatment \(ALERT\) Act](#). At that time Kennedy was already desperately ill with the brain tumor that would take his life.

It's been interesting to see the responses to people who want to list all his transgressions as a younger, less mature person, some of which were horrific lapses in judgment for which he continued to be held accountable until his death.

But what I see is a man whose efforts to make right those wrongs served many of us in the cancer community beyond well. I only hope in my own life to make up for stupid, young decisions in such a wise way.

No matter how you view Kennedy, his death and that of his sister Eunice a month before marked the end of an era for those of us whose youth, and for some our very direction in life, was defined by a Kennedy.