



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267
COLUMBIA 29211

Dear Fellow South Carolinians,

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the first South Carolina Cancer Report Card. It paints a vivid picture of the cancer problem in South Carolina, as compared to the rest of the nation, and it clearly outlines where our strengths and deficiencies lie. The publication of the Cancer Report Card shows that we are not afraid of holding ourselves accountable and it serves to focus us all on one, all-important vision – to decrease the impact of cancer on ALL citizens in South Carolina.

The Cancer Report Card defines the problem. We must use this information to create solutions. We must develop a Comprehensive Cancer Plan that allows us to detect cancers early, to decrease cancer risks, to improve access to quality cancer care and, ultimately, to significantly reduce the number of people who suffer from cancer.

We can all look with pride at the A's on our Report Card and we must be disturbed and embarrassed by the F's. That, however, is only part of the picture. Many of us have experienced cancer through the eyes of a loved one and understand that cancer is just not about statistics; it's about people struggling to stay alive. We cannot allow ourselves to look at these grades and not understand the human suffering that they represent.

Through the efforts of the SCCA, we have seen that South Carolinians are not satisfied being at the bottom of the pack. We may be coming from behind, but through the committed efforts of all sectors – medicine, business, government and grass-roots survivors - we are poised to race toward the head of the class and take a leading role in improving the cancer statistics and the lives of citizens in this state. I invite you to partner with the South Carolina Cancer Alliance (SCCA) as it provides the driving force needed to move our state ahead. By working together, we can challenge all South Carolinians to become involved in their own health, to develop healthy lifestyles, and to avoid becoming one of the disturbing statistics we see reflected in this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Sanford".

Mark Sanford

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Introduction

“The cancer burden in our states is much higher than it should be based on what we have learned through science and practice. Despite our efforts, the discrepancy between what we know and what is happening continues to persist. Our goal must be to significantly reduce the burden of cancer, in terms of human suffering as well as economic drain ... and to bring the advances of medicine to the average citizen.”

Tom Kean M.P.H. - of C-Change and Strategic Concepts

As a nation and as a state, we are confronted with the fact that many people are unnecessarily suffering and dying from cancer. If we could apply the knowledge we already have and develop effective ways to help people make changes in their behavior, we could save lives. It is encouraging to realize that many South Carolinians could remain cancer-free, even without any additional research advances or newly developed treatments. However, it is also disheartening because we are not doing enough to prevent and screen for cancer.

The South Carolina Cancer Alliance (SCCA) is a non-profit organization of more than 700 individuals, agencies, and businesses committed to decreasing the impact of cancer on all South Carolinians. It is the goal of the SCCA to change the cancer statistics in our state.

To that end, the SCCA has worked with its partners to develop the first ever South Carolina Cancer Report Card. Baseline data (grades) are presented for 19 different cancers. The focus is on rates of new cases, death rates, disparities, compliance with screening and early detection efforts, and the resources available to bring about change. The grades outlined in the Report Card will be used to help communities define the magnitude of the problem. Further, the information will be a rallying point for prioritizing specific statewide initiatives to be addressed in the South Carolina Cancer Plan, to be released in 2005.

It is our long-term goal to eliminate all avoidable suffering or death from cancer and to improve the quality of life for cancer survivors and their families. Our first step is to focus on how South Carolina compares to the rest of the nation. The publication of each future Cancer Report Card will begin to show the tremendous impact that a focused, collaborative effort can have in helping South Carolina make the grade.