

## OPINION &gt; CONGRESS BLOG

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## Congress should act to ensure better access to care for millions of cancer survivors

BY REPS. BUDDY CARTER (R-GA.) AND MARK DESAULINER (D-CALIF.), OPINION CONTRIBUTORS - 06/05/22 3:00 PM ET

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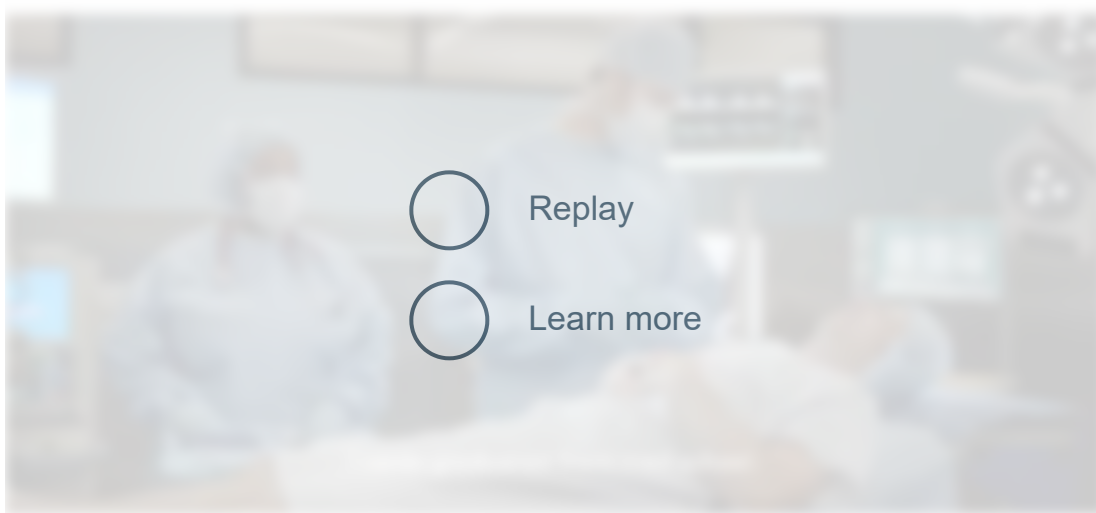
There are 17 million cancer survivors in the United States. While we are making great strides towards improving outcomes and mortality rates for cancer patients, “beating” the disease is often the beginning of another, equally debilitating condition. Cancer treatments can cause lymphedema, a chronic, painful swelling condition that interferes with daily life.

As horrible as going through cancer is, many patients report that dealing with the subsequent lymphedema is even harder. While battling cancer they had a wealth of support, but now they feel abandoned.

cancer survivors. Although lymphedema has many causes and can result from any significant impairment to the lymphatic system, the leading cause in the United States is cancer treatments that remove or damage lymph nodes and vessels.

Lymphedema is one of the most significant cancer survivorship issues and affects 2 out of 5 breast cancer survivors and 15 percent of survivors overall. Those who have undergone cancer treatment are at lifetime risk for developing lymphedema, with some experiencing symptoms within days or weeks, and others not for years or decades.

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Additionally, studies estimate that this lack of access to care is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars every year in preventable lymphedema-related complications and hospitalizations.

There is no cure for lymphedema, and no pharmaceutical treatment. Prescription medical compression garments are the long-established standard of care for treating lymphedema, but Medicare is currently unable to provide coverage for these vital supplies due to lack of a benefit category.

As Co-Chairs of the Cancer Survivors Caucus, we believe that Congress must act to close this unintended coverage gap that is hindering millions of Americans from effectively managing this chronic condition.

The Lymphedema Treatment Act ([H.R.3630/S.1315](#)), championed by Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) in the House, and Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and

With [over 350 House co-sponsors](#) and [73 Senate co-sponsors](#), this bipartisan and commonsense bill should be a priority for passage this year.

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Enactment of the Lymphedema Treatment Act will improve access to care, save money by preventing complications and hospitalizations, and enable survivors to live full and productive lives after beating cancer.

Support shouldn't end when the cancer does. This bill will be a huge step forward for the survivor community, who have suffered in silence for far too long.

*Buddy Carter and Mark DeSauliner are co-chairs of the bipartisan Cancer Survivors Caucus.*

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