All too often, cancer kills. Always cruelly, without regard to ethnicity, gender, age, means or your walk of life. All families know its dread and hurt, and Kentucky families know it better and more often than anyone else, anywhere in this country.

There’s hope. In many places cancer prevention and modern therapies are turning cancer away, but less so in Kentucky. All of that changes today.

This morning we declare that cancer in Kentucky has a new foe and our loved ones have a new champion against an enemy that for too long has robbed Kentuckians of happiness and health.

It is my honor and privilege to announce that the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center has received designation by the National Cancer Institute.

This seal of excellence places UK among twenty-two, just twenty-two, research universities in this country with clinical translational science, cancer and Alzheimer centers funded by the National Institutes of Health. The company we keep means that UK is, without question, among the leaders in America confronting diseases that face our state and nation.

All of us realize we could never reach this pinnacle alone. Success has many mothers and fathers. This has been a multi-year team endeavor, the result of strategic priorities and investments that began long before I arrived. Chief among those who set the vision for Markey include Drs. Michael Karpf and Mark Evers. Their leadership, vision and unyielding commitment brought forth a cutting-edge cancer center and medical enterprise that has the potential to roll back this scourge in Kentucky.

My predecessor, Dr. Lee Todd, Jr. He envisioned a cancer research center that would confront what he candidly called the “Kentucky Uglies” that he saw plaguing every community in his native state. Thank you, Dr. Todd.

Senator Mitch McConnell, who for many years, was an advocate for UK’s NCI-designation. His unwavering support has been and continues to be essential to our success. Senator McConnell could not be with us in Lexington today, but will join us this afternoon in Louisville as we celebrate this announcement. He sends his regards and best wishes.

Congressman Hal Rogers, Governor Steve Beshear, Speaker Greg Stumbo, Majority Leader Rocky Atkins, Representative Kelly Flood and other elected officials have stood shoulder to shoulder with us as passionate advocates as we fought for this designation. I’d like to thank them as well.

Dr. Charles Wethington, our former president, Mr. Jim Hardymon and Ms. Sally Humphrey, who along with their fellow trustees of the Markey Cancer Foundation, have graciously and generously supported our work.
Members of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees and University HealthCare Committee members. Today we have Trustees: CB Akins, Shelia Brothers and Kelly Holland and HealthCare Committee members: Nick Nicholson and Luther Deaton.

And I also want to salute the leaders of our local community in Lexington who share in this success and, with us, dream big dreams.

I also want to acknowledge the incredible leadership by the deans of our colleges and our Vice President for Research, Jim Tracy. You see, to get this done, to fulfill a promise that we were going to make an impact across this state, we engaged nine different colleges at UK. Medicine led by Dr. de Beer, who’s here today, Public Health, Nursing, Pharmacy, Tim Tracy is here, Dentistry, Arts and Sciences, Communications, Education, Social Work. It took everybody.

But most importantly, I want to thank the faculty researchers, clinicians, health professionals and staff of the Markey Cancer Center. Who devote hour after hour of passionate commitment to discover treatments and care for patients who they heroically comfort. Thank all of you.

Look Kentucky. Look what we can do when we work together for the highest of purposes and with a steady focus. Beginning now, the Markey Cancer Center extends its reach and commitment to detecting, fighting and curing cancer in Kentucky. We will number cancer’s days as a chief killer in this state.

This is why we are here today: to keep a deep and abiding promise of better tomorrows for the Commonwealth. We’re here, as we have been for 150 years, for our community, for our region and for Kentucky. Now and in the future, we are here for you. Thank you and thank you for making this incredible day possible.