

CANCER

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for those 44 was not available. DIPG is quite rare, according to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, with about 200-300 cases usually diagnosed in the entire country each year. As of May 1, there were 895 cases registered in the United States. Both the state and national totals could be higher; the registry is elective. Kentucky has one of the nation’s worst rates of cancer. In 2025, more than 10,000 Kentuckians died from cancers.

A petition on Change.org pleading for a public health investigation into the cases in Eastern Kentucky amassed about 3,600 signatures in two weeks. That petition points to a “higher than expected” rate of DIPG cases in Eastern Kentucky and refers to the cases as a “possible” cluster; public health officials are still investigating if it can be characterized that way.

“There is not a set number that constitutes a cluster,” Fisher, the cabinet spokeswoman, explained. “A cluster refers to an unusual number of cases that are close together in time and location.”

The state health department, she said, is working with the Kentucky Cancer Registry “to examine geographic and temporal trends of DIPG. This includes a comparison of the expected number of cases versus the numbers observed over the past several years to determine if a cluster exists.”

According to the Whitley County Health Department, it and local health departments in Laurel and Knox are collaborating with the state “to evaluate cases of DIPG in our region” and gather “crucial information to determine if pediatric cancer rates are unusually high in our communities.”

‘Review, transparency and accountability’
Public health officials, local health departments and the Kentucky Cancer Registry are still working “to verify the ex-

act number of diagnosed cases of diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG) among children in Southeast Kentucky,” Fisher said.

The Change.org petition asks “for a review, transparency and accountability — nothing more, and nothing less.” Lantern efforts to reach the organizer of that petition were not successful.

“We recognize that cancer clusters are complex and often difficult to interpret. We are not making assumptions about causation. However, the apparent concentration of cases warrants careful, transparent review by the appropriate public health authorities,” the petition states.

- It asks state officials to:
- Conduct a formal epidemiological assessment of pediatric brain cancer cases in Southeastern Kentucky.
 - Evaluate whether the observed cases exceed expected incidence rates.
 - Review any potential shared environmental or geographic factors, if appropriate.
 - Provide clear and timely communication to the public regarding findings.

Meanwhile, a GoFundMe page created on April 17 near Corbin for a family whose daughter was diagnosed with DIPG has already raised more than \$70,000 for medical expenses.

LEX18 reported in February about another child from Laurel County with the diagnosis, who was at the time “defying expectations.”

The state public health department, Fisher said, “is committed to keeping the public informed and will continue working with local health departments and other partner agencies to determine next steps.”

‘No room to expand’
Dr. Bruce Waldholtz, a medical spokesman with the American Cancer Society, explained that many cancers — in the breast or lung, for example — have room to expand before causing critical damage because of their positioning in the

body. DIPG tumors, on the other hand, are in the area of the brainstem called pons, which is a key part of the nervous system. “Structurally, it’s a bad area,” Waldholtz said. “There’s no room for something to expand.” There’s also no “actionable, great treatment for this,” he said. According to DIPG.org, patients are often started on steroids then radiation therapy, but chemotherapy doesn’t help with survival. “So it’s a critical area, and it’s resistant to treatment,” Waldholtz said. To have several cases in a small geographical area is a “statistical blip,” he said. “Some unknown thing is going on.” There’s no one known cause for DIPG. People can have genetic predispositions that make them more likely to develop tumors — though DIPG is not considered a hereditary disease — and then be “exposed to something that we don’t know,” Waldholtz explained. The Cleveland Clinic says that “unlike many other cancers, DIPG doesn’t seem to be related to environmental risk factors (like exposure to cigarette smoke or radiation).”

Lawmakers draw line between cancer and pesticides
During the 2026 legislative session, Kentucky lawmakers invoked the state’s high rates of cancer when debating Senate Bill 199, though no one mentioned DIPG specifically.

The bill says the warning required under a federal law sufficiently fulfills a pesticide maker’s duty to warn consumers of hazards. Supporters framed it as a defense of farmers and opponents decried it as immunity for pesticide manufacturers. When Kentucky senators debated the bill on March 5, Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer, R-Alexandria, raised questions about the connection between pesticides and cancer, neurological issues and even the birth rate: “I continue to see more unknown hormone disruptors and a decline in our birth rate. I see more lymphoma issues, younger and younger. We see so many young children, even, with cancers.” She voted against the bill

after opining on potential connections between pesticides and the “tragic neuro issues, lymphoma issues and early death” she’s seen in Northeastern Kentucky. Others specifically named glyphosate, an ingredient in pesticides like Roundup, which is at the center of a legal battle being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. There is no proven link between cancer and this ingredient. Sen. Lindsey Tichenor, R-Smithfield, for example, pointed to the ongoing legal cases surrounding the issue: “I don’t think it’s our place to step in and provide protection for companies who should either stand by their product or pay up if it doesn’t serve,” she said.

LAUREL CIRCUIT COURT

MASTER COMMISSIONER SALE

www.laurelcountymastercommissioner.com

WHEN - FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2026 at 1:00 PM

WHERE - LAUREL COUNTY JUDICIAL CENTER, 2ND FLOOR, ROOM 201

TERMS OF SALE - 10% DOWN DAY OF SALE (CHECK’S ONLY)

BALANCE WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS

- Sale #1

Rocky Branch Waterfront, LLC., v. Unknown Heirs of Jake Burkhart, et al.,
Division I, 25-CI-679
Plaintiff’s Attorney: John T. Aubrey (606)598-8078
Property Location: Glenview Road, London
Map ID: 038-00-00-108.00 NO APPRAISEMENT NEEDED
- Sale #2

Planet Home Lending, LLC., v. Steven Johnson, et al.,
Division II, 25-CI-1225
Plaintiff’s Attorney: Amy Gardner (636)537-0110
Property Location: 965 Hopkins Cemetery Road, Lily
Map ID: 100-00-00-098.35 APPRAISEMENT: \$130,000.00
- Sale #3

Equity Prime Mortgage, LLC., v. Samantha Henderson, et al.,
Division II, 24-CI-1154
Plaintiff’s Attorney: Michael R. Brinkman (513)322-7000
Property Location: 74 Dogwood Lane, Lily
Map ID: 107-20-00-045.01 APPRAISEMENT: \$115,000.00
- Sale #4

21st Mortgage Corporation v. Unknown Spouse of Arthur W. Bryant, et al.,
Division II, 26-CI-146
Plaintiff’s Attorney: G. Michael Cain (502)226-6100
Property Location: 338 Devils Neck Road, Corbin
Map ID: 122-00-00-034.04 APPRAISEMENT: \$50,000.00
- Sale #5

PennyMac Loan Services, LLC., v. Wanda Stidham, et al.,
Division II, 23-CI-126
Plaintiff’s Attorney: Amy E. Gardner (636)537-0110
Property Location: 77 Homestead Lane, London
Map ID: 050-70-00-028.00 APPRAISEMENT: \$100,000.00
- Sale #6

21st Mortgage Corporation v. Vanessa Bowling, et al.,
Division II, 26-CI-458
Plaintiff’s Attorney: G. Michael Cain (502)226-6100
Property Location: 10429 Highway 490, East Bernstadt
Map ID: 003-00-00-024.00
Map ID: 003-00-00-024.00M04 APPRAISEMENT: \$140,000.00
- Sale #7

Curtis Ham v. Unknown Heirs, Legatees and/or Devises of Ruth House, if any, et al.,
Division II, 25-CI-740
Plaintiff’s Attorney: J. Shannon Bouchillon (502)895-3111
Property Location: 40 Rush Lane, London
Map ID: 051-50-00-046.00 APPRAISEMENT: \$155,000.00

A LAUREL COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF, BAILIFF, OR OTHER COURT SECURITY OFFICER(S) WILL BE PRESENT TO ENFORCE THE ORDERS OF THE KENTUCKY SUPREME COURT.

Douglas G. Benge, Esquire
Master Commissioner
Laurel Circuit Court

HUD

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acknowledging progress,” she stated. While Handley’s statement focused on violation claims and the need for a legally compliant board, Johnson’s response emphasized that many of the issues identified are historical and that the current administration is actively working to correct them.

Johnson said the Housing Authority remains responsible for providing housing and services to residents while the stabilization work continues.

“Public officials absolutely have the right to criticize HAL, and there are legitimate questions that should be asked about its history,” Johnson stated. “But accountability should be accurate, complete and responsibly communicated.”

Super Crossword

Answers

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