I am Lauren MacPhail-Cowles, and I am excited to join the TIDE Cancer Foundation. Originally from New Jersey, I have been a proud Nutmegger for more than 25 years. I began my career at the Connecticut Legal Rights Project advocating for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. After obtaining my Masters degree in Social Work from UCONN with a concentration on policy and political social work, I began a career as a congressional staffer for U.S. Senator Chris Murphy, a role that I have been in for seven years. At the age of 37, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had no family history of the disease and had two young children at home, and a father who was also very ill. Cancer was my worst nightmare, and I didn’t know how I could possibly cope with this diagnosis. With the help of family and a truly wonderful medical team guiding me, I underwent chemotherapy, radiation and surgeries and came out the other side, healthy and strong. Along the way, I encountered many caring individuals whose small acts of kindness lifted me up. As a young woman with cancer, very few of my peers had been through anything similar,and I had moments of feeling very isolated and alone. As a recipient of a care package while I was in treatment, I know that it is sometimes those little things that can keep you going during a difficult journey. More than six years have now passed; I’m healthy, my kids are tweens, and I am honored to continue to pay it forward to more young women.