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Cate McAnulty: Local Impact

With two doctors as parents, Cate McAnulty has grown up watching people have a positive effect on others’ lives.

“I guess I was just used to seeing people being incredibly helpful,” said the 26-year-old second-year student at Harvard Law School. “And I was always drawn to the idea of work that would be immediately apparent in terms of who it would help and how it would impact them.”

The obvious, familial choice was medical delivery. But after starting her Boston College undergraduate path in pre-med, Cate found herself instead drawn toward solving such systemic health care issues as access and equity. She left pre-med and graduated with a Studio Art major, a Medical Humanities minor and, she says, “no employable skills in public health policy.”

After a short stint witnessing the needs of an underserved population while working as a medical scribe at a community health center in Dorchester, she took a job as Chief of Staff for State Representative Jim O’Day, and a more defined career path began coming into view.

“I fell in love with state government,” Cate said. “I think it’s one of the best ways to improve the lives of people in a community, because it’s more immediately impactful than national politics. Pretty much anyone can show up and make an impact.”

During her time at the State House, the O’Day team helped successfully advocate for Medication Assisted Treatment for prisoners with opioid addictions who, when not treated in jail, can become “opioid naïve” once released and therefore run a higher risk of overdose. Cate also directed the Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression.

Ultimately, she recognized that a law degree would help in her developing passion for public policy, and she applied to Harvard Law. The Rappaport Fellowship, with its intense local focus and cadre of community-minded students, staff and mentors, was the ideal fit.

“A lot of my classmates want to go work in D.C. or New York, big national organizations, which is great,” she said, “but it’s nice to be around other Rappaport cohorts who want to stay local as well.”

Cate’s summer placement was in the Health Care Division at the Attorney General’s Office, where much of the work related to the changes in the health care system as related to the coronavirus.

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The Rappaport Fellowship, she said, affirmed her passion for policy work and further refined how she will measure success: “I know exactly what I want it to feel like, which is that I know who I am working for, why the work matters and what impact it’s having.”



– Dave Cummings
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