



Matthew Parks, The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center
Testimony in Opposition to LD 1618
“Resolve, To Place a Temporary Moratorium on the Approval of Any New Motor Vehicle Registration Plates and Initiate a Registration Plate Working Group”
Thursday, May 6, 2021

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, on behalf of The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center, please accept this written testimony in opposition to LD 1618, “Resolve, To Place a Temporary Moratorium on the Approval of Any New Motor Vehicle Registration Plates and Initiate a Registration Plate Working Group.”

The physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital (BBCH) serve children and families from every corner of the state, regardless of insurance or financial status. In FY20, 48% of patients were on Medicaid. In an average year, we record over 100,000 patient encounters in both outpatient settings and in the hospital. In FY20, families from outside Cumberland and York Counties made up 21.7% of this total. Many services provided by BBCH are not found at any other hospital in the state, such as care for children's kidney disease, Palliative Care, Advanced Cardiology interventions and advanced forms of Oncology and Hematology treatment.

We thank this Committee and the Legislature for unanimously supporting legislation in January of 2018 that approved the creation of the BBCH specialty license plate, following a successful two and a half year community-led campaign to register 2,000 Maine residents for the passenger plate. Since the passenger plate was passed into law on October 1, 2018, more than 13,563 Maine residents have purchased the plate (as of March 1, 2021) and it has generated an incredible \$285,000 in unrestricted funds to enhance patient care for some of the sickest children in the state.

Community donations from sources such as the BBCH license plate are used to support innovative programs and services that otherwise would be difficult to fund. In this way, experimental treatments, such as therapeutic hypothermia, can be piloted right here in Maine and expanded to benefit all Maine children until it becomes the standard of care. Therapeutic hypothermia is a treatment performed to protect a baby's brain from injury and must be completed within the first six hours of birth in order to be effective; therefore, it's critical that pediatricians across the state are able to identify risk factors within this short window of time. Funds from the passenger plate were used to purchase the cooling equipment and also the telemedicine equipment used to partner with pediatricians across the state. This evolving

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) telemedicine service is just one example of how community-funded innovations at BBCH benefit the entire state.

After the sale of 10,000 plates, we began working with the Secretary of State's Office and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to start the process to establish additional BBCH plates in each of the motorcycle, trailer, and commercial classes. After significant financial investment and staff time – and a sizable donation from a large local banking institution to cover the cost of the campaign for the additional plates – we were surprised and discouraged to learn that our work would be put on hold for at least two years due to the legislation before you today.

We appreciate the challenges faced by the municipalities and BMV offices, such as the limited office space available to store plates, but the BBCH plate has proven itself to be viable. I see, firsthand, how the funds generated have been used to provide life-saving services to the state's most vulnerable children. I urge the committee to exempt from the proposed moratorium the current specialty plates that raise crucial funds for their respective not-for-profits in Maine.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.