



**Testimony of Dr. Mary Ottolini  
The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center  
In Support of LD 1833**

**"Resolve, To Exempt Specialty or Recognition Registration Plates Already in  
the Process of Being Created from the Moratorium on the Approval of New  
Motor Vehicle Registration Plates"**

**Tuesday, February 8, 2022**

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Dr. Mary Ottolini and I am the Chair of Pediatrics at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center. I am here today to share with you the importance of The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital (BBCH) specialty license plate to children and families from communities throughout the state, and to urge you to exempt the BBCH specialty plates from the current moratorium, as we were working collaboratively with the BMV to establish additional plates in each of the various vehicle classes.

The physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals at the BBCH serve children and families from every corner of the state, regardless of insurance or financial status. In FY21, almost half of all pediatric and neonatal patients hospitalized in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, or Pediatric Inpatient unit were covered by a Medicaid program (e.g. MaineCare). In an average year, we record over 100,000 patient encounters in both outpatient settings and in the hospital. In FY21, families from outside Cumberland and York Counties made up close to a quarter of this total. Last year, 1 in every 4 babies born in the state of Maine were born and received care at the BBCH. For highly specialized pediatric inpatient care like oncology, neurosurgery, cardiovascular, and other medical/surgical complexity the majority of children in Maine receive care at the BBCH regardless of where they live. For instance, in 2019, 92% of the 83 Maine children requiring Neurosurgery were operated on at the BBCH. Over the same period, 83% of the 72 pediatric cardiovascular patients had their hearts repaired at the BBCH. And 65% of the 72 Maine children hospitalized for an oncology or hematology-related condition received care at the BBCH.

We thank this Committee and the full Legislature for unanimously supporting the 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-type plate. Since the passenger plate was passed into law on October 1, 2018, more than 16,020 Maine residents have purchased the plate (as of November 4, 2021) and it has generated an incredible \$376,000 in funds for The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital 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,

promising, cutting edge treatments, such as therapeutic hypothermia, can be offered right here in Maine 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 telemedicine service is just one example of how community-funded innovations at BBCH benefit the entire state.

In accordance with Title 29-A; Chapter 5; Subchapter 1; Article 3 – 468.10, after the sale of 10,000 plates, we began working with the Secretary of State's Office and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to start the process of expanding the existing BBCH passenger-type plate to each of the motorcycle, trailer and commercial classes. For instance, on January 29<sup>th</sup>, the BMV approved the new plate design specs submitted, and on March 1<sup>st</sup>, the BMV confirmed that our new plate website, marketing posters, FAQs and registration brochures adhered to their rules.

Therefore, after significant financial investment and staff and volunteer time, we were surprised and discouraged to learn on March 26<sup>th</sup>, just three weeks after we had received the most recent approval from the BMV, that our work would be put on hold for at least two years due to the legislation passed by the Legislature last Session.

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 and hugely popular with the public across the state. We are also supportive of efforts to require annual reporting of how the revenue generated by specialty plates is invested for the public good. I see, firsthand, how the funds generated by the BBCH plate have been used to provide life-saving services to the state's most vulnerable children and would be proud to share that with the Legislature and the public.

With that said, I urge this Committee to support the legislation before you today and exempt from the moratorium the current specialty plates in the process of establishing additional plates in each of the various vehicle classes.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.