

April 23, 2025

Dennis Renaud, Director, Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest St., Marlborough, MA 01752
DPH.DON@massmail.state.ma.us

Re: Public Comment in Support of Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE

Dear Mr. Renaud,

My name is Maria Farese, and I work in the Medical Staff Services department at UMass Memorial Health. I'm also a mother, an advocate for pediatric cancer research, and someone who has witnessed the devastating toll childhood cancer takes not only on a patient, but on their entire family. I write to you in support of UMass Memorial Health's application to bring Proton Therapy to the UMass Memorial Medical Center Cancer Center at Marlborough Hospital.

My daughter is a survivor of neuroblastoma, a rare cancer that develops in a child's nerve tissue and impacts the adrenal glands. I am using my voice to stand up for families and children who struggle with the realities of cancer treatment. For many children, harsh side effects like stunted growth, memory loss, nausea, and fatigue are not rare; they are the normal outcome due to the lack of available treatment options. With this Application, UMass Memorial Health is proposing to offer care that is more specialized, more precise, and causes less harm, and I believe we must do everything we can to make this treatment accessible.

Throughout cancer treatment, many families are forced to travel to Boston daily for specialized regimens like Proton Therapy. It can be grueling. Even though my daughter is no longer being treated for her cancer, we still travel to Boston for monthly medical appointments. The early mornings, long appointments, and hours in the car take a toll on my family. My daughter gets extremely carsick and comes home with headaches, exhausted before the day even begins. That kind of travel is not conducive to wellness or healing.

The impact doesn't start and end with the patient. It reaches every member of the family. My other daughter developed anxiety and depression as a result of the stress, separation, disruption, and the overwhelming burden that childhood cancer creates. Most infusion areas don't allow siblings in the room, and the time spent traveling takes parents away from their other children, their work, and the support systems they rely on.

I'm passionate about this proposal not just for my family, but for the many others who can't speak for themselves. Every family deserves the best possible options for care, and having a Proton Therapy Service in Marlborough would provide an opportunity for families to stay closer together while fighting the hardest battle of their lives.

Thank you,

Maria Farese

Associate Health Professional Staff Credentialing Specialist
Medical Staff Services, UMass Memorial Medical Center

Sarah Valois



April 23, 2025

Mr. Renaud, Director
Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest Street, Marlborough, MA 01752

Application Number: UMMH-25021208-HE

Dear Mr. Renaud,

My name is Sarah. I am a licensed independent clinical social worker, a wife, and a mother. In July of 2019, at the age of 36, my husband, Jeff, was diagnosed with medulloblastoma, a brain cancer rarely seen in adults. I am writing today to support the determination of need for the proton therapy treatment room at UMass Memorial Healthcare; application number: UMMH-25021208-HE. I write not only as a caregiver, but as someone who intimately understands the chaos, fear, and heartbreak that comes with a cancer diagnosis.

Our journey has the positive ending it does today because of the proton therapy that Jeff received. I am sharing our story to advocate for greater access to proton therapy. This extraordinary treatment allowed my husband not only to survive but to return to being a father, a husband, and a vital part of our family. This treatment should be accessible to every family, not just those who can navigate the logistical and financial challenges of getting to Boston.

The Benefits of Proton Therapy

Proton therapy was life-changing and life-saving for our family. When Jeff was diagnosed, we were told he would need radiation and chemotherapy every day for six weeks. We learned his tumor was radiation sensitive and that time was of the essence to ensure the best prognosis; to ensure his survival.

As we got second and third opinions, the options for treatment were clear: undergo standard radiation (also known as photon treatment) and accept the known risks, or find a way to get Jeff to and from Boston for six weeks.

Even the best cancer treatment center in Boston agreed that proton therapy was our best option given Jeff's age, lifestyle, and life as a husband and a father. The benefits were undeniable: the long-term effects of conventional radiation, especially on the brain, eyes, ears, thyroid, and major organs, would be minimized, if not eliminated, with the precision of proton therapy.

It was clear which way we needed to go. In order to give Jeff the best chance for recovery and long-term health, we needed to pursue proton therapy.

Today, Jeff can engage in life at a level close to where he was before his diagnosis, surgery, and treatment. He's working full-time, is active with our son, playing soccer in the yard and basketball in the driveway, he plays golf every week, and most importantly, he lives. He lives without the long-term impact to his brain and major organs that would prevent him from doing so many things he loves.

That is not the case for many other families. I have connected with caregivers whose loved ones did not have access to proton therapy, and the side effects they live with are significant and sometimes devastating. Their loved ones struggle with mobility, cognition, coordination, balance, vision, hearing, and other types of cancer. Some have even lost their loved ones due to this unrelenting disease.

Proton therapy did more than treat the cancer. It preserved our family unit. Jeff not only survived the horrors of a malignant brain tumor diagnosis and its treatment, but is now thriving.

Challenges in Accessing Proton Therapy

Getting access to and beginning proton therapy was a challenge. The surgeries, other necessary procedures, and the hospitalization took their toll. Jeff lost a lot of strength and was down 25 lbs in a matter of weeks. He needed to regain a lot of that strength and weight before his body would be able to endure treatment. He required time in an inpatient rehabilitation facility where he could rebuild his strength and motor skills.

As we began looking at treatment options, Jeff initially did not want to consider treatment in Boston, given the time, energy, and resources it would take to get there from our home in West Boylston, just outside of Worcester. Without traffic, it's about an hour's drive. However, that can quickly change to two or three hours. At the same time, I was still working full-time in addition to caring for our two-year-old son. Jeff didn't see Boston as an option for us.

We didn't have the financial means for ongoing transportation or for a long-term hotel in Boston, so I coordinated a rotating schedule of friends and family who volunteered to drive Jeff into the city and back, five days a week, for nearly two months. It was an enormous logistical and emotional burden during the most uncertain and terrifying time in our lives.

As someone who understands the healthcare system professionally, I kept thinking about the strain and effort it took for me to navigate Jeff's healthcare and treatment decisions. I would often wonder, *"What about the families who don't have the support, the resources, the flexibility, or the knowledge?"*

Jeff has been spared from many of the physical and cognitive effects of treatment. He has been able to resume work and life as he previously had. We recognize how fortunate we are, and yet the thought of someone having to forgo an opportunity to receive life preserving treatment because they don't have access and transportation is heartbreaking and completely unacceptable.

The Need for Greater Access

We urgently need to bring proton therapy closer to the communities that need it. This is especially true for central and western Massachusetts, home to a significant portion of New England's population.

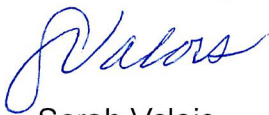
We shouldn't have had to face the possibility of not getting access to proton therapy, the best choice for Jeff and our family, all because Central MA did not have the option.

The proposed proton therapy center at UMass Memorial Health in Marlborough is a critical step toward making this life-saving care more equitable. However, this project will depend on approval from the state. I urge regulators to support this Determination of Need, not just for the patients, but for the families and caregivers who shoulder the weight of this journey.

Jeff's journey through surgery, intensive care, inpatient rehabilitation, cancer, chemotherapy, and proton therapy is one I hope to never relive. We lost so much during that time, as individuals and as a family. I never want to relive those long days as we advocated for the best treatment options and those long nights where I would wonder if Jeff would make it and what our lives would be like post-treatment.

Because of proton therapy, Jeff is still here. He has not only survived, but he has thrived post-treatment. Aside from the large surgical scar on the back of his head and the small proton therapy "tattoos" down the middle of his body, he shows virtually no physical or cognitive signs of the trauma he endured. No one meeting him today would have any idea what he went through just six years ago. He's still *Jeff*. That shouldn't be a privilege tied to geography or access—it should be the standard. Please help make that a reality.

Sincerely,



Sarah Valois





P.O. Box 961979
Boston, MA 02196

www.aimnet.org | 617.262.1180

April 24, 2025

Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

RE: AIM letter of support for application UMMH-25021208-HE

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on UMass Memorial Health's Determination of Need application (UMMH-25021208-HE). On behalf of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM), I am pleased to express our support for UMass Memorial Health's proposal to bring proton therapy to its Cancer Center in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

AIM is the state's largest business association, representing more than 3,400 employers across 150 industries and over 650,000 workers and residents. Our members span every region of the Commonwealth and depend on a healthcare system that is not only high-quality and affordable but also regionally accessible.

At AIM, advancing equitable access to healthcare across Massachusetts is a central priority. As the largest employer in Central Massachusetts—with 20,000 employees and 2,400 physicians—UMass Memorial Health plays a critical role in both regional economic development and in meeting the healthcare needs of the region. Our member companies and their employees rely on UMMH for timely, local access to care. Bringing proton therapy to Marlborough would significantly enhance regional equity in access to cutting-edge cancer treatment, particularly for patients in Central and Western Massachusetts who currently must travel long distances—or even out of state—for this specialized care.

In addition to the direct benefits to patient care and outcomes, this proposal represents a valuable collaboration between two Massachusetts-based organizations. Mevion Medical Systems, located in Littleton, is the only manufacturer of proton therapy systems in North America. Supporting this acquisition would not only bolster a local, innovative manufacturer but also strengthen the Commonwealth's position as a national leader in both healthcare delivery and medical technology development.

This initiative stands to improve health outcomes, reduce patient travel and time away from work, stimulate regional economic growth, and encourage future healthcare partnerships within the state. For these reasons, we respectfully urge your approval of UMass Memorial Health's application.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Sarah Mills, Vice-President of Government Affairs, at smills@aimnet.org or 617-262-1180.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Mills', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Mills
Vice President of Government Affairs
Associated Industries of Massachusetts



The City of
Worcester

Joseph M. Petty

Mayor of the City of Worcester

January 17, 2025

City Hall Room 305

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April 23, 2025

Dennis Renaud, Director, Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest St., Marlborough, MA 01752
DPH.DON@massmail.state.ma.us

Re: Public Comment in Support of Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE

Dear Mr. Renaud,

As the Mayor of Worcester and a proud resident of this vibrant city, I'd like to express my support of UMass Memorial Health's Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE to develop a Proton Therapy Service at the UMass Memorial Medical Center Cancer Center in Marlborough.

UMass Memorial Health is an invaluable asset to Worcester and the greater Central Massachusetts region, employing many of our residents and providing the resources our city needs to stay healthy and well. UMass Memorial Health always answers the call to support our city and its people during times of crisis, ensuring that patients across Central Massachusetts get the high-quality, affordable care they deserve.

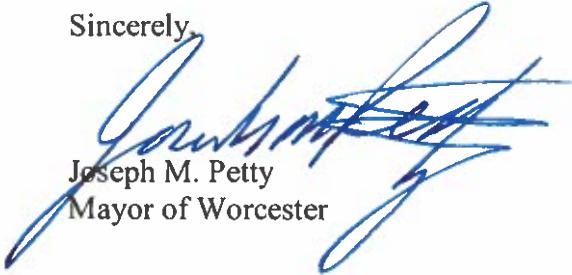
The Cancer Center in Marlborough is an example of UMass Memorial Health's profound impact on our region. Since 2013, it has been a regional leader in radiation oncology and provided cutting-edge care to many patients, including those in underserved communities. Families from all over Worcester County trust UMass Memorial Health and the Cancer Center to care for them during some of their most difficult stages of life, and I believe we should invest in the services these residents need.

Proton therapy is an advanced, proven cancer treatment that can reduce potential damage to healthy tissue, the amount of radiation needed, and side effects during and after treatment. It is especially beneficial in treating children, who can be disproportionately impacted by the side effects and tissue damage caused by traditional cancer therapies.

However, right now, Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston is the only provider currently offering this service in New England. This means that patients in Central and Western Massachusetts are required to travel far from home to receive daily proton therapy treatment, which creates substantial challenges, including added expenses, heavy traffic, parking limitations and disruptions to their daily lives. A patient's options for treatment should not be determined by their transportation options, childcare arrangements, or ability to travel - however, that is the reality for many patients that would benefit from proton therapy but face too many barriers to access it.

Bringing proton therapy to the Cancer Center will not only enhance health outcomes in our region, but it will also improve health equity by ensuring all patients have local access to the best cancer treatments in a lower cost, more geographically convenient setting. For these reasons, I support UMass Memorial Health's Determination of Need Application. Thank you for your ongoing attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph M. Petty", written over a printed name and title.

Joseph M. Petty
Mayor of Worcester

April 24, 2025

Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

**RE: Support for UMass Memorial Health Marlborough Hospital's Proton Therapy Proposal;
UMMH-25021208-HE**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in full support of UMass Memorial Health's proposal to bring proton therapy to the UMass Memorial Cancer Center at Marlborough Hospital.

This is an exciting and urgently needed investment in our regional health care system. Currently, patients who need proton therapy must travel to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston—one of the only two such facilities in all of New England—or, in some cases, even further. For many families in Central and Western Massachusetts, these travel demands are not only stressful but prohibitively expensive. They require time off work, the cost of lodging and parking, and often, the physical strain of daily travel during cancer treatment.

Proton therapy is especially important for children and medically complex patients, as it delivers highly targeted radiation while sparing healthy tissue, reducing side effects and long-term complications. Locating this advanced treatment closer to home will dramatically expand access, improve outcomes, and reduce disparities in cancer care—especially for underserved, rural, and lower-income populations who are least likely to be able to travel to Boston.

Additionally, introducing proton therapy at Marlborough will help distribute patient volume more evenly across the state, reduce bottlenecks at existing centers, and spur economic activity in the region. The technology being sourced from Mevion Medical Systems—a local Massachusetts company—further demonstrates UMass Memorial Health's commitment to innovation and economic development in our state.

This proposal will make Central Massachusetts a destination for world-class cancer care while addressing longstanding gaps in access and equity. I strongly support this application and urge its approval. Please feel free to reach out to my office if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meghan K. Kilcoyne'.

Meghan K. Kilcoyne
State Representative
12th Worcester District



WORCESTER REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
RECRUIT | RETAIN | INCUBATE

April 24, 2025

Dennis Renaud, Director, Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest St., Marlborough, MA 01752
DPH.DON@massmail.state.ma.us

Re: Public Comment in Support of Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE

Dear Mr. Renaud,

As the President & CEO for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, I would like to express our organization's support for UMass Memorial Health's Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE to develop a Proton Therapy Service at the UMass Memorial Medical Center Cancer Center in Marlborough.

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is the largest Chamber in New England, serving 2100 members across 35 communities. Our involvement with organizations across all industries gives us a unique understanding of the needs of our region and the opportunities that exist for innovation and economic development. We believe that bringing proton therapy to Central Massachusetts will not only enhance access to cancer care locally, but will also spur economic growth and drive new health care research that benefits our entire state for years to come.

UMass Memorial Medical Center has provided leading radiation oncology services at the Cancer Center in Marlborough since 2013. As cancer diagnoses continue to climb in Massachusetts, the Cancer Center has an opportunity to offer innovative treatment technologies that would help our region and our residents thrive. Currently, proton therapy is only available in New England at Massachusetts General Hospital. Concentrating this care in Boston means that residents in Central and Western Massachusetts need to travel far from home to receive daily proton therapy treatment, which leads to substantial logistical and financial challenges.

Offering proton therapy in Marlborough will make our community a world-class center of cancer care that will touch the lives of many patients, while promoting medical advancements, potential research partnerships, and the creation of new jobs. Having local access to proton therapy will also benefit patients and their employers by improving quality of life and health outcomes, as well as reducing patients' time away from home and work for treatment and recovery.

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AFFILIATE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Auburn | Blackstone Valley | Central Mass South Chamber | Clinton Area | Latin American Business Organization | Wachusett Area | Webster Dudley Oxford

Moreover, UMass Memorial Health plans to acquire its technology for this service from Mevion Medical Systems, a Littleton-based company that is the only manufacturer of proton therapy systems in North America. This acquisition and partnership would support a state-of-the-art manufacturer located in the heart of Central Massachusetts.

Making proton therapy available to patients in Central Massachusetts and across New England is not just about enhancing health outcomes and innovation – it will also improve health equity by ensuring all eligible patients have local access to cutting-edge cancer treatment in a more geographically convenient setting with lower out-of-pocket costs and travel burden.

By bringing this technology to Marlborough and becoming one of the few sites to offer proton therapy in the region, UMass Memorial Health can meet existing and growing patient demand for advanced, superior cancer treatment technology close to where they live and work. For these reasons, we are proud to support UMass Memorial Health's proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.



Timothy P. Murray
President & CEO
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Eric D. Batista
City Manager



City of Worcester

April 2025

Dennis Renaud, Director, Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest St., Marlborough, MA 01752
DPH.DON@massmail.state.ma.us

Re: Re: Public Comment in Support of Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE

Dear Mr. Renaud,

As the City Manager of Worcester, I would like to express my support of UMass Memorial Health's Determination of Need Application UMMH-25021208-HE to develop a Proton Therapy Service at the UMass Memorial Medical Center Cancer Center in Marlborough.

UMass Memorial Health is the economic engine of Central Massachusetts, employing more than 20,000 caregivers and 2,400 physicians in the region. It's also a critical safety net for all our residents, especially our most vulnerable community members. UMass Memorial Health continues to demonstrate its commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our region by expanding the specialty, innovative care that is available to patients close to where they live and work.

Since 2013, the Cancer Center at Marlborough has served as a beacon of hope for patients undergoing cancer treatment. UMass Memorial Health's proposal to offer proton therapy at the Cancer Center in Marlborough will provide patients with the lifesaving care they need and deserve. Proton therapy has been shown to reduce potential damage to healthy tissue in the body, the amount of radiation needed, and side effects from cancer treatment, meaning that most patients experience better health outcomes and quality of life. Due to its precision, proton therapy is also particularly beneficial and clinically effective in treating pediatric cancer patients.

Currently in New England, proton therapy is only available at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. This means that eligible patients in Central and Western Massachusetts must travel far from home to receive daily treatment, experiencing the added stress and costs of navigating parking, traffic, and lodging. The geographic and financial barriers to seeking proton therapy in Boston disproportionately impact low-income residents in Central and Western Massachusetts.

Eric D. Batista
City Manager



City of Worcester

without flexible jobs, affordable childcare, transportation, or the physical health to travel long distances.

Making proton therapy available to patients in Central Massachusetts and across New England is not just about enhancing health outcomes and innovation. It's about improving health equity by ensuring all patients have local access to cutting-edge cancer treatment. Bringing proton therapy to Central Massachusetts will also create a local innovation hub and world-class center of cancer care that will touch the lives of many patients, while promoting medical innovation, potential research partnerships, and the creation of new jobs in the cancer space.

For these reasons, I am proud to support UMMH's proposal to introduce a Proton Therapy Service in Marlborough.

Kind regards,

Eric D. Batista
City Manager, Worcester