

4/25/2025

Mr. Dennis Renaud,
Director, Determination of Need Program
Department of Public Health

Dear Mr. Renaud,

I am writing to support Dr T.J. FitzGerald's initiative to secure a proton unit at UMassMemorial Health Care, part of UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dr FitzGerald is qualified to lead this initiative. He is Professor and Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at UMassMemorial Health Care/UMass Chan Medical School. Over his long career at UMass he has been instrumental in advocating for initiatives to ensure equitable access to advanced radiation therapy technologies, which can significantly improve outcomes for patients facing cancer.

The most compelling reason for this initiative is the profound impact that care closer to home can have on pediatric patients and their families. Currently, many families must travel to Boston for proton therapy, which not only creates significant logistical challenges but also adds emotional and financial strain during an already difficult time. In addition to its known and proven benefits for pediatric cancer patients, proton therapy plays a pivotal role in treating adults with recurrent cancers. Its precision allows for targeted treatment while sparing surrounding healthy tissue, especially important for patients who have already undergone other treatments. This technology can offer these patients renewed hope, improved quality of life, and increased chance of a successful outcome. His knowledge of the clinical benefits of proton therapy - less exposure to radiation and fewer side effects - positions him to be a vital advocate for this technology.

In addition to his clinical expertise, Dr FitzGerald possesses exceptional academic and leadership skills not only at UMassMemorial but also at IROC (Imaging and Radiation Oncology Core, formerly QARC) where he has been the Director for over 25 years, providing scientific, technical, and quality assurance expertise for both National Cooperative Group protocols and international protocols. He is recognized world-wide as a leader in Radiation Oncology and is widely published and respected.

The acquisition of a proton machine would not only enhance UMassMemorial's capabilities but also transform the lives of countless patients and their families, allowing them to access vital care in a less disruptive manner. I believe Dr FitzGerald is the right person to lead this initiative, and I fully support his efforts. His vision for utilizing this technology to serve the population of Central Massachusetts reflects his commitment to improving health care equity in our state.

I fully endorse Dr FitzGerald's DoN application without reservation. If you would like to discuss his qualifications for this initiative further, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Maria Giulia Cicchetti, MD

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**Baystate
Health**



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Baystate  Regional Cancer Program

Division of Radiation Oncology

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Michael Yunes, MD., FACR, *Chief*

Yanqun Dong, MD., PhD.; Shivank Garg, MD.; Seth Kaufman, MD., FACRO; Thomas Napier, MD.

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

4/28/2025

Dear Mr. Renaud,

I am the Division Chief in the Department of Radiation at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts, where I have been professionally treating patients for over 20 years.

I was very happy to hear that UMass Memorial Healthcare has approved the development of the first proton center in Western Massachusetts under the direction of Dr. TJ Fitzgerald, MD. For decades, the only available regional proton center was in Boston, at Mass General Hospital where significant patient backlogs have often prevented new patients from being seen in a timely manner. In addition, the distance to travel has caused a significant barrier to appropriate care for many patients.

As the field of radiation oncology has evolved over the last several decades, it has become apparent that proton therapy is an essential modality for many adult and pediatric diseases, both in the primary and recurrent setting. Baystate Medical Center has had a long collaborative relationship with the UMass Memorial Medical Center, particularly with radiation oncology. We have shared patients when technical issues such as machine replacement have prevented us from treating certain diagnoses at our institution. The referring and patient response to this excellent collaboration has been universally viewed as a successful process during these transitional events. We continue to share patients as necessary based on specific treatments available at UMass Memorial Medical Center when they are not be available at Baystate Medical Center.

The excellent leadership of Dr. Fitzgerald in the Department of Radiation Oncology at UMass Memorial Medical Center as well as with the Imaging and Radiation Oncology Core (IROC)/National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN) ensures that this endeavor will be a success for the region.



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I support the determination of need (DoN) application without reservation. Patients in New England and beyond will be well served with proton therapy available under the guidance of UMass Memorial Health Care.

I would be happy to answer any other questions or concerns, should they arise.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Yunes, M.D., FACR, FACRO
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Mr. Dennis Renaud
Director, Determination of Need Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
67 Forest Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

Dear Mr. Renaud:

Dana-Farber is pleased to submit this letter of support for UMass Memorial Health's (UMMH) proposed proton therapy center.

UMMH is an important member of the Dana-Farber Cancer Care Collaborative, which allows medical oncology physicians, nurses, pharmacists and staff to share best practices and harness knowledge and innovation to create breakthrough treatments to improve the lives of patients. Additionally, Dana-Farber operates a medical oncology practice and infusion center at UMass Memorial Milford Regional Medical Center.

We have been briefed about UMMH's plans regarding the proposed proton therapy center in Marlborough. Dana-Farber is supportive of this project because proton therapy is an important part of comprehensive cancer care and there is a documented need for the technology in the region. Proton therapy decreases morbidity for pediatric cancers and cancers near vital organs, most especially the brain. Additionally, because proton therapy targets radiation precisely at the cancer, it creates fewer problems with learning, behavior, hearing, vision, hormones, the development of future cancers, and cognitive development. Proton Therapy is sometimes the only available treatment to save a patient's life.

There is a critical shortage of proton therapy capacity in New England. We believe the region requires 14 to 19 treatment rooms to serve all patients eligible for proton therapy, yet only four (4) licensed rooms exist, all at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Three (3) of these rooms rely on equipment over 20 years old, recently taken offline for extensive, years-long repairs.

Dana-Farber analyzed our own patient base from central & western Massachusetts, the Albany NY area, Northern CT, Vermont, and New Hampshire, which are areas closer to Marlborough than traveling to Boston. In FY'24, Dana-Farber saw over 37,000 patients from those areas – most of who were ultimately treated in their community by a local provider via collaboration on treatment plans. We estimate that, of patients appropriate for radiation therapy, about 15% of those patients are eligible for proton therapy. We estimate that, due to lack of access, just a small fraction of those patients are ultimately receiving proton therapy during their cancer journey.

When patients in New England are seeking treatment using proton, even when MGH's facilities were fully operational, capacity constraints force them to travel outside New England, typically to New York City, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, or Florida. Some even have traveled to Minnesota or Texas for their care. A recent groundbreaking for a proton center in Wallingford, CT area may alleviate some of the regional access, but still will require significant travel for care. UMass Memorial Health's proposed proton therapy center would help address this urgent gap, ensuring more patients in Massachusetts and New England can access this vital treatment locally.

An approval for a proton therapy center at UMMH will help Dana-Farber fulfill its mission to keep care local through collaboration and clinical consultation. We believe this center would also reduce healthcare spending for patients who would otherwise be treated at MGH or travel to distant facilities. This approval would further the ability of patients to receive treatment in the most optimal center for their specific diagnosis and individual needs and avoid patients having to come into Boston for treatment.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Ebert, MD, PhD
President and CEO
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute