

Good afternoon,

My name is Toni Levandoski and I live in Cumberland. My son, Henry Levandoski, was a patient in the Maine Medical Center NICU in 2022, and I am a member of the Pediatric Parents Advisory Committee at Barbara Bush Children's Hospital.

Henry was born at just 27 weeks due to severe pregnancy complications that put both of our lives at risk. I was admitted to Maine Medical Center four weeks prior to his birth in hopes of giving us both the best possible chance of survival. When Henry was born, he weighed only 500 grams. Doctors estimated that he had stopped growing around 22 weeks gestation.

Just hours before he was born, we were meeting with a priest and the palliative care team. We were preparing for the worst while desperately hoping for the best. The odds were stacked against him before he ever took his first breath, but by staying at Maine Medical Center, we knew we were giving him his only real chance.

Henry was so fragile that he lived inside a protective plastic covering for the first week of his life to protect his undeveloped skin. Even the gentle act of placing a hand on him could send him into respiratory distress. He would not have survived transport to Boston. The care he needed could not wait.

Henry spent five long months in the NICU receiving life-saving treatment from the extraordinary doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, and specialists at Maine Medical Center. Every single day, they fought for him. And because they were there — because those services existed — my son is here today.

If the NICU had not been available in Maine when Henry was born, I would not have this thriving, joyful little boy in my life. I cannot even allow myself to imagine that alternative.

The NICU is not optional. It is not a luxury. It is a lifeline. It is vital to families like mine and to the health and stability of our entire community. Access to this level of care is one of the reasons families choose to stay and raise their children in Maine.

Henry is thriving today because the Maine Medical Center NICU gave him a fighting chance. Cutting or reducing these services would mean that future families may not get that same chance.

Please protect the NICU. Lives depend on it.

Thank you.