



February 18, 2019

Dear Member of Congress:

As your constituents, we are writing to warmly welcome you to the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and extend our best wishes for the years ahead. We're hoping that after navigating the complexities of the government shutdown, Congress is able to come together to create the policy changes that will support the strongest possible future for families.

As you address our nation's opportunities and challenges in the new session, we urge you to consider the role that breastfeeding plays in giving mothers and their children important and long-lasting health benefits that contribute to significant public health cost savings. These dual impacts are so substantial that we've coined a phrase: "breastfeeding saves dollars and makes sense." That is true not only for FAMILIES, but also for EMPLOYERS and the overall ECONOMY.

Monumental health and economic gains can be achieved through policy and practice changes that ensure American families have the support they need to reach their breastfeeding goals. A 2016 study of both maternal and pediatric health outcomes shows that optimal breastfeeding rates could prevent 3,340 deaths, \$3 billion in medical costs, and \$14.2 billion in costs of premature death, annually! Now, that makes a lot of sense!

The evidence for the value of breastfeeding to children's and women's health is scientific, solid, and continually reaffirmed by new research. The great majority of pregnant women and new mothers want to breastfeed, but the significant barriers they face in community, health care, and employment settings impede their goals. Many national initiatives are underway to alleviate these barriers, and you have a critical role to play in ensuring that we continue to make progress toward national health objectives and improving the lives of families across the country.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the following priorities you can move forward in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to help support breastfeeding:

## BREASTFEEDING POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Increase Access to Paid Family Leave:**
  - Establish at least 12 weeks of job-protected, paid family & medical leave as a self-funded national insurance program that is affordable and cost-effective for workers, employers and the government, and is accessible to all workers, regardless of gender/marital status, and including military service members



- **Maintain Health Plan Coverage of Breastfeeding Support, Supplies, and Counseling:**
  - Maintain health plan coverage of comprehensive lactation support (including counseling, education, and equipment and supplies) during the antenatal, perinatal, and postpartum period as a preventive service without cost-sharing, including both the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Women's Preventive Services mechanisms; and align Medicaid coverage to ensure equitable access to these services for all women and children
  
- **Support Working Parents:**
  - Maintain and strengthen implementation of the federal "Break Time for Nursing Mothers" law, providing hourly (nonexempt) workers with access to break time and a private space to express breast milk during the work day; and expand coverage of the law to all workers
  - Ensure that breastfeeding mothers can't be fired or discriminated against in the workplace via passage of pregnancy accommodation/nondiscrimination legislation with explicit inclusion of lactation in the statutory language
  
- **Maintain Federal Funding For Breastfeeding Support Programs:**
  - Continue and enhance funding for the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Breastfeeding Support Programs at \$15M/year, especially for initiatives to improve maternity care practices and increase access to peer & professional support and continuity of breastfeeding care
  - Continue and enhance the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health program to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities through local, culturally appropriate programs, and continuing support for breastfeeding as part of this program
  - Continue and enhance the breastfeeding initiative in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), by fully funding the breastfeeding peer counselor program at the current authorized level, and increasing the future authorized level, to ensure more breastfeeding mothers receive access to this critical support

Mothers, fathers and partners, family members, communities, health care providers, employers, and researchers are committed to all of these efforts to support breastfeeding families.

Maternal and infant health outcomes in the United States lag significantly behind our peer countries. When we invest in women's, infants' and children's health, the whole nation benefits. As a member of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, we encourage your leadership in bringing policymakers together to improve the landscape of care for our nation's breastfeeding families. We look forward to working with you to advance these policy priorities during the upcoming session, and again, welcome!

## **SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **International, National, and Tribal Organizations:**

American Breastfeeding Institute  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists  
Childbirth and Postpartum Professionals Association  
Every Mother, Inc.  
HealthConnect One  
Healthy Children Project, Inc.  
Human Milk Banking Association of North America  
Improving Birth  
International Board of Lactation Consultant  
Examiners  
La Leche League USA  
Mom2Mom Global  
National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy  
National Association of Professional and Peer  
Lactation Supporters of Color  
United States Lactation Consultant Association  
Women-Inspired Systems' Enrichment

### **Regional, State, and Local Organizations:**

Acadiana Breastfeeding Coalition  
Arkansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.  
Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware  
BreastfeedLA  
Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates  
Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition  
Indiana Breastfeeding Coalition  
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition  
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition  
Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition  
Northern Nevada Breastfeeding Coalition  
Pine Belt Lactation Services  
Saline, MO Breastfeeding Coalition  
TriCounties Breastfeeding Alliance  
West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance