

February 13, 2023

Dear Members of the 118th Congress:

As your constituents, we warmly welcome you to the new congressional session and extend our best wishes for the years ahead. As you embrace opportunities to address national challenges during this session, we urge you to consider the role Congress can play in building the infant nutrition security infrastructure this nation sorely needs. In particular, breastfeeding gives infants and mothers important and long-lasting health protections that contribute to significant public health cost savings.<sup>i</sup>

Breastfeeding has a profound impact on population health outcomes. The evidence for the value of human milk on overall health for infants, children, and mothers is scientific, robust, and continually reaffirmed by new research. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends infants be exclusively breastfed for six months with continued breastfeeding while introducing complementary foods for two years or as long as mutually desired by the mother and child.<sup>ii</sup> Breastfed infants are at lower risk of certain infections and sudden unexplained infant death. A recent CDC study of over 3 million U.S. births found that ever breastfeeding is associated with a 26% reduction in the odds of post-perinatal (between 7-364 days) infant death.<sup>iii</sup> Breastfed children have decreased risk of obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia. Women who breastfed reduce their risk of specific chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast and ovarian cancers.<sup>iv</sup>

The majority of pregnant people and new mothers want to breastfeed.<sup>v</sup> Yet, numerous barriers in healthcare, community, and employment settings impede breastfeeding success. While 83.2% of infants are breastfed at birth, only 24.9% of U.S. infants are still exclusively breastfed at six months of age and there are persistent breastfeeding disparities by racial, geographic, and socioeconomic factors.

The American people, especially our babies, are the nation's most valuable resource. We must take action through systemic interventions that ensure every baby is fed and every mother has the opportunity to reach their breastfeeding goals. Recent legislative wins like the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act clearly demonstrate that breastfeeding is a bipartisan policy issue. Thank you for your careful consideration of the following breastfeeding-friendly priorities you can move forward in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congressional Session:

**Increase Funding for Breastfeeding in the Federal Budget:**

*We urge Congress to invest in breastfeeding as a public health imperative.*

Human milk feeding plays a critical role in establishing good nutrition, healthy weight, and in reducing the risk of chronic disease. Funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding program helps state and local governments, tribes, community-based organizations, and hospitals implement upstream interventions that support breastfeeding families and positively impact the health of the American people. Lactation support is also an important component of a wide range of federally funded programs, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, State Physical Activity and Nutrition program, Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, Healthy Start, and beyond.

**Address Gaps in Infant Nutrition Security Systems:**

*We urge Congress to expand access to pasteurized donor human milk, advance a plan for infant and young child feeding in emergencies, reduce predatory marketing practices by formula manufacturers, and ensure the safety of commercial milk formulas.*

This year, in addition to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many families also had to navigate the devastating infant formula recall and shortage. Policymakers must prioritize policies and investments for infant nutrition security so that we never find ourselves in this situation again. It is critical that the nation takes decisive action to build a robust infrastructure for infant nutrition security in the U.S. that holds all families in care.

#### **Increase Support for Breastfeeding in Workplaces:**

*We urge Congress to establish a national paid family and medical leave program and address gaps in lactation accommodation protections for employees and students.*

Employment policies in the United States make breastfeeding incredibly difficult. The United States is one of the only countries in the world without a national paid family and medical leave program, and nearly 1 in 4 employed mothers return to work within two weeks of childbirth.<sup>vi</sup> Many new moms return to work or school before the breastfeeding relationship has been firmly established, only to find themselves fighting for the right to pump breast milk during the work or school day. Without the time and space they need, they can lose their milk supply and risk painful infection.<sup>vii</sup>

#### **Access to Lactation Support and Supplies**

*We urge Congress to advance legislation that increases access to telehealth services and improves community lactation support as part of comprehensive maternity and postpartum care.*

Too often, new parents are left without the basic lactation support and supplies they need to start and maintain human milk feeding. The pandemic revealed that rural and economically marginalized urban communities with limited broadband lack access to telehealth lactation support services<sup>viii</sup> and gaps in continuity of care and community-based support services such as home visiting are widespread. Most health plans are required to cover the costs of lactation support services and breastfeeding equipment and supplies.<sup>ix</sup> However, implementation of the federal guidelines by insurance providers has been inconsistent, and many families struggle to access the supplies and services they need.<sup>x</sup>

#### **Maternity Care Practices**

*We urge Congress to take decisive action to confront the U.S. maternal mortality crisis, including working with and investing in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to increase the implementation of evidence-based maternity care practices that enable breastfeeding.*

The United States is facing a serious maternity care crisis. Maternal mortality is higher than it was in previous generations, with significant and worsening disparities for women and families of color, particularly in Black and Indigenous communities.<sup>xi</sup> Maternity care practices play an essential role in reducing Black maternal mortality and infant morbidity while setting families up for breastfeeding success. These practices contribute to lifelong health and wellness.

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As a member of the 118th Congress, we encourage your leadership on these critical policy priorities. Congressional history shows that breastfeeding is truly a bipartisan issue that legislators from both sides

of the aisle can agree on. Families are counting on all of us to work together and eliminate the barriers that impede lactation success.

We look forward to working with you to advance these policy priorities.

### **SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS**

*as of 3/8/2023*

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

9to5

1,000 Days, an Initiative of FHI Solutions

A Better Balance

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Nursing

American Association of Birth Centers

American Breastfeeding Institute

American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians

American Public Health Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Baby Café USA

Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.

Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe Tribe

Benten Technologies, Inc.

Birthing Project USA

Breastfeeding Family Friendly Communities

Breastfeeding USA

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Health Equity, Education and Research

Center for Law and Social Policy

Chocolate Milk Café National Inc.

Cimilre Breast Pumps

Coalition For Economic Justice

Coalition For Lactation-Friendly Schools

Consortium for Infant and Child Health

Cubtale, Inc.

Every Mother, Inc.

First Focus Campaign for Children

Futures Without Violence

HealthConnect One

Healthy Children Project, Inc.

Healthy Horizons

Heart For The Hopeless

Human Milk Banking Association of North America

Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor

International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners

Jobs With Justice

La Leche League Alliance for Breastfeeding Education

La Leche League of the United States of America, Inc.

Lactation Education Resources

Lactation University

March for Moms Association

Mamava

March for Moms

Medela LLC

Military Birth Resource Network and Postpartum Coalition

MilkMate

Mom Congress

Mom2Mom Global

MomsRising

Mothering Justice

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Neonatal Nurses

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Hispanic Medical Association

National Lactation Consultant Alliance

National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Health Network  
Nourish & Thrive  
Nursing Mothers Council, Inc.  
Nurturely  
Nurturings (Attachment Parenting  
International)  
Orthodox Jewish Nurses Association  
Oxfam America  
Pacify Health, LLC  
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Breastfeeding  
Coalition

Public Health Accreditation Board  
Pumpspotting  
PUSH Birth Partners  
Sage Transformations  
Sanford Health  
The Institute for the Advancement of  
Breastfeeding and Lactation Education  
The MOTHER Lab  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
Werbie, LLC  
Women of Reform Judaism  
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network  
ZERO TO THREE

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

#### Alabama:

Alabama Breastfeeding Committee

#### Alaska:

Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition

#### Arizona:

Central Arizona Lactation Consultants  
Association

#### California:

A Family Affair  
Alameda County Breastfeeding Coalition  
API Breastfeeding Taskforce  
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific  
Islander (AANHPI) Lactation Collaborative of  
California  
Baby Café Bakersfield  
Breastfeed LA  
Caring Across Generations  
Experience Birth & Beyond  
Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission  
Inland Empire Breastfeeding Coalition  
Legal Aid at Work  
Maternal and Child Health Access  
San Diego County Breastfeeding Coalition  
Sonoma County Department of Health Services

#### Colorado:

Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition  
Colorado Children's Campaign  
Colorado Jobs With Justice  
Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition  
CREA Results  
Cuenta Conmigo Lactancia  
Denver WIC  
Edgewater Collective  
Elephant Circle  
Guereca's Consultants  
Jefferson County Public Health  
Kaizen Food Rescue  
Latinas Community Connections Services  
MotherJourney  
Triad Early Childhood Council/Child Care  
Innovations

#### Connecticut:

Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition  
Oh, Baby! Lactation Care

#### District of Columbia:

The District of Columbia Breastfeeding Coalition  
Paid Leave For All

#### Florida:

Breastfeeding Coalition of Palm Beach County

Central Florida Jobs With Justice  
Florida Breastfeeding Coalition  
Florida West Coast Breastfeeding Task Force  
Lactation Whisperer  
MJ Lactation Services  
Mothers' Milk Bank of Florida  
Tampa Bay Breastfeeding Task Force  
The Nest of Lakeland

Georgia:

Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition  
Georgia Southern University  
Wonderlove Lactation Services

Hawaii:

Beautiful Informed Beginnings LLC  
Breastfeeding Hawaii  
Hawaii Indigenous Breastfeeding Collaborative  
Hawai'i Maternal Infant Health  
Collaborative/Early Childhood Action  
Strategy  
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of  
Hawaii  
La Leche League of Maui  
La Leche League of Oahu

Idaho:

LilyArden Lactation

Illinois:

Mothers' Milk Bank of the Western Great Lakes  
North Central Breastfeeding Task Force  
Precious Jewels Moms Ministries  
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois  
Rock Island County Health Department  
Whiteside County WIC Program  
Women Employed

Indiana:

Dupont Hospital  
Indiana Breastfeeding Coalition  
Indiana Department of Health- WIC

Iowa:

Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition

Kansas:

Kansas Birth Justice Society  
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition

Kentucky:

College of Nursing, University of Kentucky  
Kentuckiana Lactation Improvement Coalition  
Willa, Nutrition & Lactation

Louisiana:

Birthmark Doula Collective

Maine:

Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition

Maryland:

Birth and Breastfeed with Confidence  
Hands That Touch Home Health  
Hartford County Health Department- Maternal  
Child Health Unit  
Maryland Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics  
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition  
Maryland Family Network  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse  
Practitioners Maryland Chesapeake Chapter  
Trinity Wellness  
Westminster Pediatrics

Massachusetts:

Bay State Birth Coalition  
Boston Medical Center Vital Village Networks  
Massachusetts Lactation Consultant Association  
Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast  
The Boston Breastfeeding Coalition

Michigan:

Berrien County Breastfeeding Coalition  
Breastfeed Macomb  
Favor Community Services  
Gratiot County Breastfeeding Coalition-Child  
Advocacy  
Hurley Medical Center

InterCare Community Health Network WIC  
Program  
Michigan Breastfeeding Network

Minnesota:

Gender Justice  
Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition  
Minnesota Milk Bank for Babies  
Twin Cities Regional Breastfeeding Coalition

Mississippi:

East Mississippi Breastfeeding Coalition  
Mississippi Breastfeeding Coalition  
Mothers' Milk Bank of Mississippi

Missouri:

Healthy Nourishments, LLC  
Missouri Breastfeeding Coalition  
St. Louis Breastfeeding Coalition

Montana:

Billings Breastfeeding Coalition  
Billings Clinic  
Lactation Associates of Montana  
Montana Association of WIC Agencies

Nebraska:

Nebraska Breastfeeding Coalition  
Touch of Gold

Nevada:

Breastfeeding Task Force of Nevada  
Southern Nevada Breastfeeding Coalition

New Hampshire:

Center for Autism & Early Childhood Mental  
Health at Montclair State University  
New Hampshire Breastfeeding Task Force

New Jersey:

A Shared Mothers Journey, LLC  
Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition  
NJ Citizen Action

New Mexico:

New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force

New York:

Ancient Song Doula Services  
Bronx Breastfeeding Coalition  
Joslyn Levy and Associates  
Lehman College, CUNY  
Long Island Lactation Consultant Association  
Morrisania D&TC WIC Program  
New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition  
NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council, Inc.  
NYC Department of Health  
Supporting Our Mothers Initiative  
The New York Milk Bank

North Carolina:

Breastfeed Durham  
Breastfeed Orange NC  
Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute  
Duke University School of Nursing  
Emerald Doulas, LLC  
Kayce Hodos Counseling & Consulting  
MAAME, Inc.  
Milk & More Lactation  
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition  
North Carolina Justice Center  
North Raleigh Doulas  
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive  
Justice Collective  
Triangle Doulas of Color, LLC  
Ultimate Fertility and Lactation Consulting

Ohio:

Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre Ltd.  
Central Ohio Breastfeeding Coalition  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center  
Dayton Children's Hospital  
Marion Public Health 50  
Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance  
The Ohio Women's Public Policy Network  
The Walker Group, LLC

Oklahoma:

Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates  
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

Oregon:

African American Breastfeeding Coalition of  
Oregon  
Black Parent Initiative  
Linn County Public Health WIC Program  
Northwest Mothers' Milk Bank

Pennsylvania:

CONVERGE at the University of Pittsburgh  
La Leche League of Western Pennsylvania  
National Council of Jewish Women Pittsburgh  
Section  
Penn State College of Medicine  
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition  
St. Luke's University Healthcare Network  
Women's Law Project

Puerto Rico:

Alimentación Segura Infantil

Rhode Island:

Children's Friend

South Carolina:

BirthMatters  
Prisma Health Midlands Healthy Start  
South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

South Dakota:

Avera Behavioral Health – Outpatient Services  
Early Learner South Dakota

Tennessee:

Comprehensive Care and Wellness  
Memphis Area Lactation Consultant Association  
Shelby County Breastfeeding Coalition  
Tennessee Breastfeeding Coalition

Texas:

Breastfeeding Perspectives  
Kelsey-Seybold Clinic  
Texas Breastfeeding Coalition  
VAC | Westbrook Clinic

Utah:

Comunidad Materna en Utah

Vermont:

Family Center of Washington County  
Milton Family Community Center  
Orange County Parent Child Center Inc.  
Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling  
& Support Services  
Springfield Area Parent Child Center  
Sunrise Family Resource Center  
The Junior League of Champlain Valley  
Vermont Donor Milk Center, Inc.  
Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance  
Vermont Lactation Consultant Association  
Windham Southeast School District's Early  
Education Services

Virginia:

#757Breastfeeds  
Breastfeeding Blues & Bliss, LLC  
Healthy Families Newport News  
Nurture

Washington:

Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington  
South Sound Lactation Network

West Virginia:

West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance

Wisconsin:

Breastfeeding Alliance of Northeast Wisconsin  
Lac Courte Oreilles Community Health Center,  
Maternal Child Health Program  
Wisconsin Association of Lactation Consultants

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<sup>i</sup> The Cost of Not Breastfeeding. <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/cost-not-breastfeeding/36187>. Published 2019. Accessed April 28, 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> Meek, J. Y., & Noble, L. (2022). Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, *150*(1). doi:10.1542/peds.2022-057988

<sup>iii</sup> Li, R., Ware, J., Chen, A., Nelson, J. M., Kmet, J. M., Parks, S. E., . . . Perrine, C. G. (2022). Breastfeeding and post-perinatal infant deaths in the United States, a national prospective cohort analysis. *The Lancet Regional Health - Americas*, *5*, 100094. doi:10.1016/j.lana.2021.100094

<sup>iv</sup> Making the decision to breastfeed | womenshealth.gov. womenshealth.gov. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/making-decision-breastfeed/#1>. Published 2020. Accessed December 20, 2022.

<sup>v</sup> *Breastfeeding Report Card, 2022*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>. Accessed December 25, 2022.

<sup>vi</sup> The Real War on Families: Why the U.S. Needs Paid Leave Now. In *These Times*. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/the-real-war-on-families>. Published 2015. Accessed April 28, 2021.

<sup>vii</sup> Morris, L., Williams, J. C., & Lee, J. (2019). *EXPOSED: Discrimination Against Breastfeeding Workers* (Rep.). Center for WorkLife Law.

<sup>viii</sup> *Voices From The Field: COVID- 19 & Infant Feeding*. U.S. Breastfeeding Committee; 2020. <http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/d/do/3600>. Accessed April 13, 2021.

<sup>ix</sup> Women's Breastfeeding Services, Breastfeeding Services and Supplies. Women's Preventive Services Initiative. <https://www.womenspreventivehealth.org/recommendations/breastfeeding-services-and-supplies/>. Accessed April 28, 2021.

<sup>x</sup> *Coronavirus on Households in Rural America*. NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Published 2020. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UYBTE-Izo\\_XZAdkMUPpnkb3HmQO6ihCO/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UYBTE-Izo_XZAdkMUPpnkb3HmQO6ihCO/view). Accessed April 22, 2021.

<sup>xi</sup> MacDorman, M. F., Thoma, M., Declercq, E., & Howell, E. A. (2021). Racial and ethnic disparities in maternal mortality in the United States using Enhanced Vital Records, 2016–2017. *American Journal of Public Health*, *111*(9), 1673-1681. doi:10.2105/ajph.2021.306375