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The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) stands strongly for all families and fights for their health, safety, and well-being. Breastfeeding is the nutritional standard for infant and young child feeding as recognized by scientific and health organizations worldwide. It is critical that international, national, and state policies work to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding so that every family who chooses to breastfeed has the opportunity to succeed. **Unfortunately, in the United States and worldwide, barriers to breastfeeding success are widespread.**

This spring, delegates from around the world gathered in Geneva for the 71st World Health Assembly (WHA). The WHA is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is attended by delegations from all 194 WHO Member States. As part of this meeting, a [resolution on infant and young child feeding](#) was proposed which affirmed the critical role of breastfeeding in maternal and child health, expressed concern over low rates of breastfeeding worldwide, and called on WHO Member States to increase investment and implementation in breastfeeding policies, systems, and environmental supports.

According to [The New York Times](#), the resolution was expected to be easily approved, however, the United States delegation strongly opposed the resolution, specifically calling for the removal of passages that called on Member States to restrict the promotion of artificial infant milk, a practice that has been shown to have deleterious effects on breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity. Reportedly, the U.S. delegates went so far as to threaten punishing trade measures and withdrawing military aid from Ecuador, which had planned to introduce the measure. Ultimately, the U.S. signed a modified version of the resolution that was proposed by Russia. **The USBC calls upon our government to ensure that we lead the way with policy decisions and actions that are based on current scientific evidence and free from industry influence.**

The marketing of artificial infant foods in our healthcare facilities severely undermines individuals' rights to make informed decisions and act of their own free will, which is a fundamental aspect of our democracy. This is why these predatory practices are identified as detrimental to maternal and child health, and why the [International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#) is the global standard and needs to be implemented in the United States. Parents need to be informed of medical recommendations, which state that parent's own milk is a primary nutrition source, with safe donor milk as a fallback, and artificial alternatives when medically warranted. **Nothing in the WHA Resolution or any of the documents it referred to would have restricted access to formula.**

President Trump tweeted that the "U.S. strongly supports breastfeeding". The USBC is a national coalition with a mission to work collaboratively to build a landscape of breastfeeding support across the United States; and as such we appreciate the gesture. However, we must encourage the U.S. government to take further steps to ensure that breastfeeding support is upheld as a primary prevention strategy in all domestic and foreign policy arenas. Breastfeeding builds a foundation for life-long health and wellness for mothers, babies, and all of society. It is considered a global maternal and child health imperative due to extensive research on infant feeding, which has consistently proved critical short- and long-term health risks of *not* breastfeeding, as well as significant costs of artificial milk feeding. **This**

abundance of evidence is why the WHA expects commitment by all nations to support the health of all families through breastfeeding support.

The President also connected the important issues of infant feeding and human susceptibility to malnutrition and poverty. Breastfeeding has a critical role to play in mitigating the stark inequities seen globally in maternal, infant, and child health, as well as in disaster and health security. Many diseases and deaths due to infant feeding are actually due to a lack of support for breastfeeding *and/or* a lack of the resources needed to acquire and safely prepare artificial milk (boiling water, clean bottles, etc). Breastfeeding is an important component of women's reproductive health from birthing to child spacing, and it touches all cultures around the world. In the U.S., more than 80% of women say they intend to breastfeed, but far fewer meet their goals. Adequate maternity leave, support for breastfeeding, and workplace accommodations are some of the fundamental programs that would allow women to achieve their goals.

When maternal and infant morbidity and mortality are at stake, any actions by organizations or governments that elevate corporate profit over public health is inexcusable. The U.S. and its leadership must stand up to industry lobbyists and support, promote and protect the health of parents and babies. The USBC stands prepared and committed to lend our expertise to future efforts to support breastfeeding as the first food, both within the U.S. and in collaboration with our global family.

**Board of Directors
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee**