



The Facts on the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act (H.R. 3110/S. 1658) and Flight Attendants

Airline Management Claim: There's no way for airlines to create a private location to pump on the plane.

Fact: Airlines can provide a privacy curtain in the galley, similar to the ones already in place on many aircraft, with a latch or sign to not enter, or in any seat located in a sufficiently private location where available.

Airline Management Claim: Allowing Flight Attendants to be away from their duties to pump risks endangering passenger safety.

Fact: It is common for Flight Attendants to step away from their duties when the plane is at cruise altitude to attend to other necessary physiological or personal needs, like using the restroom or eating. Safety protocols are already in place for such situations and could be applied equally to meeting lactation needs. For example, the manager's amendment specifies that these breaks could not be taken during critical phases of flight (taxi, takeoff, landing). In the event an urgent safety need arises, a crewmember can cease milk expression in a matter of seconds to respond. Flight Attendants are already pumping and expressing milk in flight even though the airlines have not provided any official breaks for pumping.

Airline Management Claim: Flight Attendants can already construct their schedules to avoid flights that conflict with their pumping needs/airlines offer reduced schedules that already meet Flight Attendant's needs.

Fact: Flight Attendants and pilots bid for monthly schedules, either as a line holder or a reserve. Schedules are awarded based upon seniority. A nursing mother can only hold trips available at their seniority. Flight attendants who are nursing cannot be guaranteed a reduced schedule, shorter trip segments, or more "convenient" schedules.

Airline Management Claim: Flight Attendants on small aircraft (fewer than 50 seats) flying solo must be at their post at all times so the cabin is not unattended.

Fact: Flight Attendants on such aircraft are legally permitted to leave the cabin to attend to other necessary physiological needs or to provide backup to pilots leaving the flight deck to take care of their own needs. The manager's amendment makes clear that Flight Attendants are on call (on the other side of the curtain) for safety issues that may arise.

Airline Management Claim: On short flights, there is no time to pump during flight and insufficient time in between required duties on the ground.

Fact: Airlines can provide additional staff coverage while the plane is on the ground for tidying the aircraft, and boarding/deboarding passengers, etc. while the Flight Attendant takes a milk expression break.

Airline Management Claim: Breast pumps can interfere with aircraft controls.

Fact: Breast pumps are already approved as portable medical devices for use by passengers on all commercial carriers, and there should be no difference for Flight Attendants or pilots.

Airline Management Claim: Breast pumping would interfere with Flight Attendants' ability to respond quickly in an emergency.

Fact: The process of breast pumping can be terminated on a moment's notice. A Flight Attendant would be able to stop pumping and attend to an emergency in the same amount of time or less than it would take to stop taking care of other physiological needs (e.g. using the restroom).

Airline Management Claim: The breaks needed are too long (40 minute example) to be safe.

Fact: Pumping typically takes no more than 15-20 minutes--less time than it takes a flight attendant to eat a mid-flight lunch, and the same amount of time it takes for trips to the bathroom in some circumstances. Some are able to do it even more quickly.

Airline Management Claim: Pumping will cause distraction of passengers/lead to harassment.

Fact: No Flight Attendant should face harassment by coworkers or the public. Airlines already take measures to prevent harassment of employees. It is already a serious violation of federal law to intimidate a flight attendant or to lessen their ability to perform their duties. If airlines are concerned that additional measures would need to be taken to address this specific situation, the solution is not to prohibit nursing mothers from being able to pump but to incorporate prevention of harassment based on pumping into their existing policies, trainings, and materials.

Airline Management Claim: Pumping in the galley is not sterile/poses risk of contamination for food service.

Fact: Modern breast pumps deposit breast milk directly into small bags or bottles that are quickly and easily sealed. Once milk is expressed, [according to the CDC](#), "breast milk is a food and may be stored alongside other foods in any refrigerator that is appropriate for food storage. Employers, coworkers, cleaning staff, other family members, and childcare providers should not consider or treat breast milk as a biohazard." Breast milk therefore does not pose any risk of contamination of other food items.

Airline Management Claim: Curtains will not be sufficiently free from intrusion from coworkers and the public.

Fact: Curtains can be secured with snaps and/or clear signage that would indicate staff only. This is similar to privacy safeguards such as pop-up tents or screens commonly used in [other employment contexts](#).

Airline Management Claim: Accommodating pumping will cause flight delays/interfere with service.

Fact: Flight Attendants have already pumped and continue to do so with no known reports of flight delays as a result. Pumping can take place while a plane is at cruise altitude.

Airline Management Claim: Flight Attendants do not need guaranteed space and time to pump on aircraft because they are free to structure their own schedules to avoid the need for pumping breaks during their shifts.

Fact: Flight Attendants typically work duty days from 10-16 hours long. Because pumping moms typically need breaks to pump every 2-3 hours, break time will be necessary during their shifts. Because flight attendants' schedules are set based on a seniority bidding system, most flight attendants will not be able to bid for trips that avoid the need for pumping during flight.

Airline Management Claim: Most flight attendants can avoid needing to pump at work by taking a longer maternity leave.

Fact: Flight Attendants should not have to choose between breastfeeding and returning to work. Many may wish to continue breastfeeding after they return to work, and many need to return soon after giving birth in order to continue supporting their families.

Because Flight Attendants are typically unable to fly for the last couple of months of their pregnancies, many use up much of their available FMLA leave before they've given birth, leaving them only a few weeks following childbirth. Many airlines offer only limited maternity leave beyond FMLA, and often it is only partially paid or entirely unpaid.

*Prepared By:
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