



November 20, 2003

Honorable Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary  
Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

The United States Breastfeeding Committee urges you to support the scheduled launch of the *National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign*. The scientific evidence that supports the public service announcements has been carefully reviewed by a team of highly-respected researchers from the field of maternal and child health. The importance of breastfeeding to the health of women and children is undeniable. If the Department of Health and Human Services is sincere in its desire to advance the *HealthierUS* goal of helping Americans live longer, better, and healthier lives, then it must demonstrate that desire through its unwavering support of the *National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign*.

The campaign was developed by The Advertising Council in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health. It is our understanding that the content of the campaign as well as the launch date are currently in jeopardy. This is most concerning to us. Members of the United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) would like to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these concerns. We are available the morning and afternoon of December 3<sup>rd</sup> and the afternoon of December 4<sup>th</sup>. Please let us know if either of these dates meet with your approval or suggest an alternate date.

The USBC was organized in 1998, with the support of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The USBC represents more than 50 organizations, including health professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies. The common denominator among USBC members is a deep commitment to the health and well-being of mothers and babies, a commitment we share with the Department of Health and Human Services.

United States Breastfeeding Committee  
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A key element of the USBC strategic plan for breastfeeding in the United States is to “ensure that breastfeeding is recognized as the normal and preferred method of feeding infants and young children” and to subsequently “develop and implement a national, comprehensive, and coordinated marketing program which portrays breastfeeding as normal, desirable and achievable.” Furthermore, the *National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign* will help to “ensure that breastfeeding is recognized as the normal and preferred method of feeding infants and young children.”

The public service announcements developed for the campaign reflect data gleaned from thirty-six focus groups conducted in four major cities across the United States. Participants were selected to ensure diversity with regard to marital status, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, and age. Data clearly show that for the advertising campaign to be effective, it is essential that the consequences of *not* breastfeeding be communicated. For more than twenty years breastfeeding promotion efforts have emphasized the benefits of breastfeeding. And while initiation rates are at an all time high, duration rates are at an unprecedented low.

We are confident, given the expertise of the Ad Council, that the campaign strategy they are recommending is both appropriate and necessary. Given the success of prior Ad Council campaigns there is no justification for delaying the launch or altering the tenor of the campaign.

Your willingness to meet with members of the Committee to discuss our concerns is most appreciated. We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,

Amy Spangler  
Chair

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