



**Sent to Candidates Clinton, Huckabee, McCain
and Obama on February 11, 2008**

Dear Candidate:

I am the current Chair of the United States Breastfeeding Committee, an independent nonprofit 501(c)3 coalition of 35 nationally influential organizations representing over half a million concerned professionals and the families they serve. Though our member organizations vary in their individual missions, they share a significant common interest in advancing the health of Americans by working collaboratively to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding through breastfeeding.

As you know, both the economy and healthcare are critical issues in the minds of voters and you are probably aware that healthcare expenditures related to obesity and type 2 diabetes in childhood are staggering. You may not be aware that research clearly supports the role of breastfeeding and human milk in decreasing the risk of future obesity and type 2 diabetes in children. Breastfeeding also has been shown to provide initial immunization to newborns, reduce the risk of specific childhood illness such as otitis media, and improve oral health in children. Working mothers who breastfeed their infants experience fewer absences due to illness in their infants, thus positively impacting workplace economics. Based on strong and abundant scientific evidence of the relationship between these health outcomes and breastfeeding, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other professional organizations have published policies supporting six months of exclusive breastfeeding and continuation with the addition of healthy complementary foods for the first year of life and beyond.

Promoting the provision of human milk to newborns and children is a sound strategy from both a public health and an economic perspective. It is also a strategy that resonates well with the general public and healthcare providers. The United States Breastfeeding Committee and its member organizations urge the active inclusion of the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in any healthcare agenda put forth by candidates standing for election.

To provide you with current data on this matter, I am attaching a summary of the recent report from Agency for Healthcare, Research and Quality (AHRQ), a unit of the US Department of Health and Human Services. This report reviews the evidence supporting the positive health implications of providing human milk to infants and young children and also details the risks of not breastfeeding. Should you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

The Committee is interested in learning if, and how, you would incorporate protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding into your health plans for the Nation if you were to be elected as the next president. We very much look forward to hearing from you on this issue of national importance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Audrey J. Naylor'.

Audrey J. Naylor, MD, DrPH, FAAP, FABM
Chair