



December 16, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

The undersigned organizations representing health professions and advocacy for women, children, and families would like to express our strong support for the breastfeeding support provision (Sec. 4207) in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Human milk is the optimal source of nutrition for infants, and an enormous body of research demonstrates the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child. Section 4207 will provide women returning to work with safe, sanitary conditions and reasonable break time to express breast milk, providing the best possible nutrition for their infants. This support is needed to enable mothers and children to achieve the universal medical recommendations of exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continued breastfeeding for the first year of life and beyond. Currently, 24 states have laws related to breastfeeding in the workplace, but they are not uniform, resulting in a haphazard approach to support for working mothers.

As you know, the evidence for the value of breastfeeding to children's *and* women's health is scientific, solid, and continually being reaffirmed by new research. Compared with formula-fed children, those who are breastfed have a reduced risk of ear, skin, stomach, and respiratory infections; diarrhea; sudden infant death syndrome; and necrotizing enterocolitis. In the longer term, breastfed children have a reduced risk of obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia. Women who breastfed their children have a reduced long-term risk of diabetes, breast and ovarian cancers, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease. And studies are looking at the effects of breastfeeding on still other diseases and conditions in which breastfeeding may reduce the risk to mothers and infants.

Breastfeeding also has significant economic and environmental benefits: For every non-breastfed infant, \$475 is lost to extra health care costs just during the first year of life, to treat just three common diseases. Breastfed infants are healthier, so their parents have an almost three-fold reduction in absenteeism from work to care for sick infants. Employers that provide breastfeeding support also experience lower turnover rates and higher employee productivity and loyalty. And most visibly, breastfeeding reduces or eliminates the need to purchase expensive formula (and to discard waste from formula packaging).

Interest in breastfeeding is at an all-time high: 77% of women breastfeed their infants at birth. But breastfeeding rates drop rapidly after hospital discharge. More than 50% of women with infants less than one year old are in the labor force. Working mothers are more likely to stop breastfeeding early if they do not receive the support they need in the workplace. Only 12% of U.S. mothers are exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months, and only 21% are still breastfeeding at 1 year.

Not only is workplace breastfeeding support necessary to bridge this gap, it requires few resources, and ultimately saves money! The future prosperity of our country greatly depends on the productivity of women, as workers *and* as mothers. Women's economic security and the health of mothers and families translate directly into the potential of our future workforce and the vigor of our economy.

We commend you for supporting breastfeeding—a scientifically proven practice that makes mothers and children healthier and eases the burden on our health care system—in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. We applaud your ongoing work to provide quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

United States Breastfeeding Committee
Academy for Educational Development
Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine
African-American Breastfeeding Alliance
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Breastfeeding Institute
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians
American Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
AnotherLook
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Baby-Friendly USA
Best for Babes® Foundation
Carolina (Global) Breastfeeding Institute, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Childbirth Connection
Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
Every Mother, Inc.
Healthy Children Project
Human Milk Banking Association of North America
International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners
International Childbirth Education Association
La Leche League International

Lamaze International
National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy: Research, Education, and Legal
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition
National WIC Association
U.S. Lactation Consultant Association
Wellstart International
ZERO TO THREE

cc: The Hon. Tom Harkin, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Hon. Max Baucus, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
The Hon. George Miller, Chair, Committee on Education and Labor
The Hon. Charles Rangel, Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
The Hon. Henry Waxman, Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Hon. Jeff Merkley

The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) is an independent nonprofit coalition of 41 nationally influential professional, educational, and governmental organizations. Representing over half a million concerned professionals and the families they serve, USBC and its member organizations share a common mission to improve the Nation's health by working collaboratively to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding. For more information on USBC, visit www.usbreastfeeding.org.