Ms. Cheryl Lebedevitch  
Senior Workplace Program Manager & Policy Analyst  
Steward of the Workplace Support Constellation  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
4044 N Lincoln Ave, # 288  
Chicago, IL  60618

Dear Ms. Lebedevitch:

Thank you for your letter regarding the HHS Office on Women’s Health (OWH) Supporting Nursing Mothers at Work (SNM@W) online resource. I am glad to hear OWH has been a valued partner in increasing breastfeeding rates in the United States. The Supporting Nursing Mothers at Work online content is an important part of OWH’s efforts to improve public health by promoting environments that enable more women to continue breastfeeding after returning to work.

OWH updated the SNM@W content in August as part of an effort to make the entire womenshealth.gov website easily accessible on mobile devices with any screen size. The previous version of the SNM@W content was not compatible with today’s web technologies that allow people to access websites on a laptop, tablet, or mobile phone. Also, the vast majority of the pages in this section were not being viewed. When this web content was audited after the 2017 evaluation, metrics showed that 80% of visitors to SNM@W went to just five out of more than 500 pages in this section.

With more than 500 pages, the previous version of the SNM@W represented over 25% of the entire womenshealth.gov website. The womenshealth.gov website provides information on over 80 different women’s health topics, including breastfeeding, and serves almost 1 million users each month. The SNM@W pages needed to be converted to the new format so they would be accessible on a mobile device, along with the rest of the womenshealth.gov website. Since the SNM@W content occupied such a large proportion of the site, the entire womenshealth.gov website was penalized in Google search results for not being 100% mobile-friendly.

Unfortunately, much of the previous SNM@W content, such as the still photos, the number of pages, and the organization of the pages, were not compatible with the technology that makes websites mobile-friendly.

In addition to the incompatibility with the most recent technology, OWH is not able to update and maintain over 500 pages of content on just one topic. As a result, OWH streamlined the SNM@W content into 18 pages accessible on mobile devices. OWH kept all 28 SNM@W videos, the highlight of the SNM@W content. Now that the entire womenshealth.gov website is accessible on a mobile device, we are able to serve an increasing number of users. In August OWH alerted the community to the recent SNM@W updates and provided a preview of the site before the previous version was taken offline.
In the last 3 months, there have been twice as many visitors and page views of the updated SNM@W compared to the number of visitors and page views of the previous SNM@W across the same time last year. Metrics show that website visitors are staying longer on the updated pages and are more likely to explore the content on the website compared to the previous version. As a result, we are confident that the updated site is more accessible and useful.

In September all Spanish-language SNM@W pages were launched. The Spanish-language pages were not posted at the same time as the updated English-language content because of the structure of the contracting mechanism for translation. All updated English-language SNM@W content, text and photos or videos, is now available in Spanish.

In 2017 our evaluation showed the need to communicate solutions for all types of industries using examples and relatable language with specific examples. As a result, the updated language reflects more industry-specific information about how many women of reproductive age work in their industry. Many titles and examples were edited to exclude specific business names in order to make general categories such as “large retail store” relatable to more businesses. However, much of the language about the “Break Time for Nursing Mothers” law remains the same, although it was streamlined to eliminate redundancies.

OWH continues to make improvements to SNM@W now that it is accessible to users on mobile devices. OWH is seeking ways to incorporate more of the still photos of lactation spaces in a format compatible with today’s technologies. OWH is also developing new tools for employers, such as a decision flow-chart for lactation space and 1-page fact sheet applicable to all industries and featuring many of the still photos you discuss.

We will continue to look for ways to promote Supporting Nursing Mothers at Work and hope that the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee will continue to promote these resources to your member organizations, in addition to hosting the Supporting Nursing Mothers at Work presentation platform on www.usbreastfeeding.org/SNMW-platform that features the content in the format you desire.

I hope this letter addresses your concerns. Thank you for your work on behalf of women who want to breastfeed after returning to work.

Sincerely yours,

Brett P. Giroir, M.D.
ADM, USPHS
Assistant Secretary for Health