**RAN THE BAGS!**
A national campaign to rid hospitals of formula company discharge bags
Anne Merewood MPH, IBCLC
Marsha Walker RN, IBCLC

**Goal of the Mass. Breastfeeding Coalition**
Work with Mass. DPH to eliminate free formula company diaper discharge bags from all hospitals in the state

**Possible approaches**
- "Bad for breastfeeding"
- "Bad for public health"
- "Marketing should not be allowed in the hospital"
- "Get big drug companies out of the hospital"

**Other Issues: Hospital endorsement**

**Opposed to formula discharge bags via hospitals:**
- US Government Accountability Office
- AAP
- ACOG
- CDC
- Office on Women’s Health (DHHS)
- WHO

**What did we do in Massachusetts?**

Anne Merewood, MPH, IBCLC; Marsha Walker, RN, IBCLC
Timeline
Spring/Summer 2005
• DPH forms a task force to revise perinatal regulations
Fall 2005
• Public testimony
  - 38 comments favored eliminating the bags
  - 8 comments favored retaining the bags
  • International Formula Council
  • Some physicians and staff nurses
  • Grocery Manufacturers Association
  • Massachusetts Hospital Association
  • Ross Products Division, Abbott Laboratories

Timeline
December 2005
• Regulations approved by the Massachusetts Public Health Council, including the elimination of hospital distribution of commercial discharge bags
February 2006
• Office of Administration and Finance invokes little used rule that it must approve all new regulations
• Governor Mitt Romney rescinds formula bag ban saying it interferes with mothers’ choice
Public Health Council meeting
• 3 members object to rescinding the bag prohibition and ask for a 3 month study period to look into reinstating the prohibition

MBC Flies into Action
• Press releases
• Boston Globe stories
• Parents Paper ad
• Writing to legislators
• Meeting with Office of Administration and Finance
• On-line petition to the Governor
  – 3500 signatures urging Mitt Romney to reinstate the bag prohibition

MBC Flies into Action
• Rally in front of the State House to present Governor with petition
• Statements solicited from CDC, AAP, ACOG, APHA, MPHA stating their opposition to formula bag distribution

This "free" bag comes with a $7.00 price tag. So why does Gov. Romney want your hospital to hand it out?

Anne Merewood, MPH, IBCLC; Marsha Walker, RN, IBCLC
Meanwhile... Behind the Scenes

April 2006
- Romney removes one member of the PHC who supported the bag prohibition

May 2006
- 4 days prior to the PHC meeting Romney removes the other 2 bag ban supporters
- Romney actively courting $600 million Bristol Myers Squibb facility

When Politics Collides with Health

- May 23, 2006
  - Public Health Council does not rescind bag prohibition
  - Perinatal language reverts back to previous regulations stating that breastfeeding mothers can receive a commercial bag when prescribed by the physician or requested by the mother

Ban the Bags! Launch of a National Campaign

- Launch/booth at ILCA conference 2006
- Press release
- Website - www.banthebags.org
- Contact email: info@banthebags.org

Ban the Bags!

- Campaign Goal:
  - End hospital distribution of formula company sponsored diaper discharge packs across the USA

Ban the Bags!

- Raise public awareness of unethical marketing tactics by the infant formula industry, and of their effect on breastfeeding rates

Anne Merewood, MPH, IBCLC, Marsha Walker, RN, IBCLC
Ban the Bags!

- Other goals:
  - Provide practical resources to advocates seeking to persuade their state or hospital to stop handing out bags
  - Study formula company bag distribution nationally; catalog all hospitals

Ban the Bags!

- Display at several conferences
- Cafepress store
- Letter from MBC to all CEOs, chiefs of OB and pediatrics, and VP/directors of nursing in MA birthing hospitals still giving out the bags, urging them to cease bag distribution—endorsed by AAP, ACOG, and AWOHNN

Ban the Bags!

- Online:
  - Evidence for bags/low breastfeeding
  - Organizations against and what they say
  - Support letters for banning bags (APHA, CDC, AAP) FAQs from hospitals
  - Action ideas
  - Tool Kit (countering industry strategies)

Ban the Bags!

- Letters moms can send to hospital saying they didn’t want the bag
- Letter MBC sent to all MA hospitals urging them not to give out bags
- Corporate compliance document
- Help hospitals develop responses to challenges they encounter during the process of removing bags

Hospital study

- OWH funding
- Goal: Catalog bag practices in all hospitals across the US
- Run by the Breastfeeding Center, BMC

Hospital study

- **BMC**: HRSA Regions I (CT,MA,ME,NH,RI,VT); II (NY,NJ); III (DC,DE,MD,PA,VA,WV); VI (AR,LA,NM,OK,TX)
- **LA Task Force**: Regions V (MI,MN,WI,IL,IN,OH) IX (CA,NV,AZ)
- **Tennessee**: Region IV (MS,AL,GA,FL,NC,SC,KY,TN)
Region I: New England (hospitals GIVING bags)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Hospitals (%)</th>
<th>Pop. (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>19/27 (70)</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>5/7 (71)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>9/12 (75)</td>
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<td>39/51 (76)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>28/30 (93)</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>ME</td>
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Regions II and III

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<td>69/89 (100)</td>
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<td>DE</td>
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<td>DC</td>
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<td>WV</td>
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Regions IV and V

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<td>97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• KY</td>
<td>52/54 (96)</td>
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<td>• MI</td>
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Region VI

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<td>LA</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>Las Palmas??</td>
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Ban the Bags!

• Recent “converts”:
  - Brigham and Women’s, Boston (8,000 births)
  - Winchester hospital, MA (2007)
  - All Kaiser hospitals in N and S CA
  - All hospitals in the Providence Health System in Oregon
  - Women and Infants, RI
  - Harlem Hospital, NYC

Ban the Bags!

• Next steps:
  - Work with state coalitions to send letters/do whatever needs to be done
  - Send congrats to hospitals that ARE bag free
  - Compile a “what’s in your bag” piece for the website
What you can do!

- Send us info on your hospitals
- Send us info to post on the website
- Info on any statewide or regional efforts to ban bags locally
- Work at the state level with hospitals