

Dear Member of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, wish to welcome you to the 115th Congress and send best wishes for the year ahead.

As you address our nation's opportunities and challenges in the new session, we urge you to consider the role that breastfeeding plays in giving mothers and their children important and long-lasting health benefits. These impacts are so substantial that "breastfeeding saves dollars and makes sense," not just for *families*, but also for *employers* and the *economy*.

Monumental health and economic gains can be achieved through policy and practice changes that ensure American families have the support they need to reach their personal breastfeeding goals. A 2016 study of both maternal and pediatric health outcomes shows that optimal breastfeeding could prevent 3,340 deaths, \$3 billion in medical costs, and \$14.2 billion in costs of premature death, annually!

The evidence for the value of breastfeeding to children's and women's health is scientific, solid, and continually being reaffirmed by new research. The great majority of pregnant women and new mothers want to breastfeed, but they face significant barriers in community, health care, and employment settings. Many national initiatives are underway, and you have a critical role to play in ensuring that we continue to make progress toward national health objectives.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the following priorities you can move forward in the 115th Congress to help support breastfeeding:

PRIORITIES IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)

- Continue and enhance funding—either within or outside the Prevention & Public Health Fund—for the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Breastfeeding Support Programs at \$15M/year, especially for initiatives to improve maternity care practices and increase access to peer & professional support and continuity of breastfeeding care;
- Maintain health plan coverage of comprehensive breastfeeding support (including counseling, education, and equipment and supplies) as a preventive service without cost-sharing, including both the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the Women's Preventive Services mechanisms; align Medicaid coverage to ensure equitable access to these services for all women and children;
- Maintain and strengthen implementation of the federal "Break Time for Nursing Mothers" law, providing hourly (nonexempt) workers with access to unpaid break time and a private space to express breast milk during the work day; expand coverage of the law to salaried (exempt) workers

OTHER LEGISLATION/POLICY PRIORITIES

- Support establishment of public spaces that are breastfeeding-friendly via:
 - Inclusion of a provision as part of reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to require all large and medium hub airports to provide a private, non-bathroom space in each terminal for mothers to express breast milk;
 - Passage of legislation to require federal buildings to provide lactation spaces to visitors
- Ensure that breastfeeding mothers can't be fired or discriminated against in the workplace via passage of pregnancy accommodation/nondiscrimination legislation with explicit inclusion of lactation in the statutory language
- Establish at least 12 weeks of job-protected, paid family & medical leave as a self-funded national insurance program that is affordable and cost-effective for workers, employers and the government, and is accessible to all workers, regardless of gender/marital status, and including military servicemembers
- Direct the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to implement its proposed voluntary guidance for industry on the type and quality of evidence used to substantiate structure/function claims on infant formula products, and to make this guidance mandatory;
- Request that the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection investigate deceptive advertising practices in the infant formula industry, including deceptive health claims made on formula labels, undisclosed paid endorsements for formula products, and native advertising (use of formats that make advertising or promotional messages look like objective content)
- Request that the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection declare maternal status protected with regard to digital marketing to prohibit data collection that violates the privacy of expecting women and new mothers

OTHER FUNDING PRIORITIES

- Fund and direct the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the National Institutes of Health to convene a national consortium on breastfeeding research, to develop and update national agendas for surveillance and research on topics related to breastfeeding and infant nutrition, promote the dissemination of research findings, and monitor the translation of research into best practices
- Continue and enhance funding for the HHS Office on Women's Health Breastfeeding Support Programs, especially for initiatives to provide resources to employers to support nursing mothers in the workplace and to support breastfeeding mothers via the Your Guide to Breastfeeding, the It's Only Natural campaign, and the OWH Helpline
- Address obstacles to greater availability of safe banked donor human milk for fragile infants via funding the:

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to conduct a systematic review of current evidence on the safety and efficacy of donor human milk, and a study on federal regulation and support of donor milk banks; and
- Health Resources and Services Administration to establish evidence-based clinical guidelines for the use of banked donor milk.

INCORPORATION/EXPANSION OF BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT WITHIN EXISTING PROGRAMS

- Continue and enhance the breastfeeding initiative in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), by fully funding the breastfeeding peer counselor program at the current authorized level, and increasing the future authorized level, to ensure more breastfeeding mothers receive access to this critical support
- Continue and enhance the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant by fully funding it and continuing support for Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS), to improve the health of all women, children and families; direct the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) to ensure alignment of SPRANS funds with the selection of the Breastfeeding National Performance Measure by 49 jurisdictions
- Continue and enhance the Healthy Start program by fully funding it, to improve the health of America's mothers and children before, during, and beyond pregnancy; direct the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) to ensure inclusion of breastfeeding support as part of this program
- Continue and enhance the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, by extending its authorization and fully funding it, to support pregnant women and families, particularly those considered at-risk, with necessary resources and skills to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn; direct the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) to ensure inclusion of breastfeeding support as part of this program
- Continue and enhance the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health program to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities through local, culturally appropriate programs, and incorporate support for breastfeeding as part of this program; include support for breastfeeding as a priority in any new or emerging initiatives to advance community health
- Create, continue, and fund policies and programs that promote and support the integration of community health workers into the Public Health Workforce, to promote positive health behaviors and outcomes for populations in medically underserved communities, and incorporate support for breastfeeding as part of these programs