

TESTIMONY OF AMY SWAN IN SUPPORT OF
BREASTFEEDING LEGISLATION (HB 2284)

Distinguished Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Amy Swan. I was born in Topeka and have lived my entire life in Lawrence, Kansas. I have two children, a son age six named Trey and his sister Maya, who is two. I work as a parent educator with Parents as Teachers and I have my own independent business to supplement our family's income.

In November of 2003, I was at a Lawrence health club working out and doing some shopping at their "Mother's Day Out" event. When I went to pick up my daughter, she was extremely fussy, so I sat on the couch in the nursery to breastfeed her. When I got up to leave, the male worker came up to me and told me when he was in there, he did not want me breastfeeding. He claimed he did not want his son to see a nursing mother and he told me I could go across the hall to a room with a blow up bean bag.

I left the club feeling very upset and decided to write the owner to tell him about my experience. The owner wrote me back shaming me for nursing in front of a man I did not know and questioned why I didn't think of other people's feelings when I chose to nurse my daughter. He also gave me some alternative places I could have gone to nurse my daughter, including going in the bathroom and shutting the door.

What happened to me at the health club was one of the most degrading and humiliating experiences of my life. What was always such a natural and beautiful experience for me was now being treated as a very shameful "act" that I should have been doing in private. I still continued to breastfeed my daughter in public, but felt very self-conscious every time I nursed her. Unfortunately, other women who have such an experience may choose to either stop nursing altogether, or opt to take along formula or a bottle because they don't want to offend anyone or be accused of "exposing" themselves. It doesn't seem fair that a bottle-fed baby in Kansas has fewer restrictions than my daughter, simply because my daughter is nourished with mother's milk.

Distinguished Committee Members, I earnestly ask that you pass this very basic legislation that protects the very natural and very beneficial act of breastfeeding. Our dedicated Representative Paul Davis said it best, "A kid needs to be breastfed when they need to be breastfed." A mother should be able to breastfeed her baby anytime and

anyplace her baby is hungry, without having to worry about what the repercussions may be. The CDC, the US Department of Health and Human Services, the AMA, and the American Academy of Pediatricians strongly recommend breastfeeding. If we are medically encouraged to breastfeed, we should not be socially discouraged.

This legislation will help eliminate the demeaning and damaging experiences that far too many Kansas mothers have faced in the past. When our Kansas mothers feel public support for this vital act of breastfeeding, their esteem and effectiveness as mothers will be greatly strengthened.

Please help Kansas join the 26 other states that protect a woman's right to breastfeed wherever she has a legal right to be.

Thank you very much for your attention and consideration of this legislation.

Amy Swan

Nursing Mother