

La Leche League of Kansas

Brenda Bandy, Professional Liaison

3005 Cherry Hill Rd. • Manhattan, Kansas 66503 • 785-
539-3993 • bandy@kansas.net

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RE: HB 2284

To: Health and Human Services Committee Members

Representative Jim Morrison, Chairperson	Representative Peggy Mast, Vice-Chairperson	
Representative Bob Bethell	Representative Pat Colloton	Representative Willa DeCastro
Representative Mario Goico	Representative Don Hill	Representative Kasha Kelley
Representative Nancy Kirk	Representative S. Mike Kiegerl	Representative Patricia Kilpatrick
Representative Geraldine Flaharty	Representative Delia Garcia	Representative Tom Holland
Representative Brenda Landwehr	Representative Frank Miller	Representative Bill Otto
Representative Eber Phelps	Representative Judy Showalter	Representative Sue Storm
Representative Jason Wakins		

I am testifying in support of HB 2284, protecting a woman's right to breastfeed in public, wherever she has the right to be. I am an accredited La Leche League Leader and the Professional Liaison for La Leche League of Kansas. In this capacity, I provide mother-to-mother help with breastfeeding information and support, through monthly meetings, phone calls and home visits. As the Professional Liaison for LLL of Kansas, I am a resource for LLL Leaders and mothers throughout Kansas with medical and legal questions. I have seen and heard firsthand from mothers in Kansas who have been asked to leave a public place when breastfeeding. They, in general, feel humiliated, frustrated, embarrassed, ridiculed and harassed. I would like to make the following points for you to consider:

Kansas is one of only 13 states without breastfeeding legislation. Colorado, Oklahoma, Missouri and Texas all have laws in place protecting a woman's right to breastfeed in public. Nebraska has breastfeeding legislation pending. HB 2284 would increase the incidence and duration of breastfeeding by helping to change the public's opinion about breastfeeding. Overall, mothers are encouraged to breastfeed, yet the underlying message from some is that breastfeeding is accepted as long as it is done in the privacy of one's own home. Legislation brings the importance of breastfeeding into the sphere of public awareness, and by doing so legitimizes breastfeeding for the general public and lets women know that their babies have the right to be breastfed wherever they happen to be.

Women do not stop being mothers and babies do not stop being hungry when they are in public. When mothers fear being embarrassed, humiliated or facing criminal prosecution when breastfeeding in public, they may choose to stop breastfeeding, or not to choose breastfeeding at all. Increases in breastfeeding rates are a part of the Breastfeeding Healthy People 2010 goals set by the US Department of Health and Human Services. In

the HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding, the 2010 target rates for breastfeeding initiation is 75%, 50% for breastfeeding at 6 months and 25% for breastfeeding at one year. However, according to the Center of Disease Control, in 2003 in Kansas, only 37% of babies were still breastfed at 6 months and an even lower 17% were still being breastfed at one year. These rates are far below the targeted rate. While there are several factors contributing to these low breastfeeding rates, one factor is surely the fear of being asked to leave, cover-up, hide, or being ashamed when breastfeeding in public. Many mothers do not breastfeed in public simply because they do not see enough other mothers doing it. When mothers feel confident in their ability to meet their babies' needs, wherever they are, more women may chose breastfeeding and choose to breastfeed for longer periods. Breastfeeding duration rates would increase.

Thank you for your support of this important bill that will have a lasting impact on the health and well being of mothers and babies throughout Kansas.

Sincerely,

Brenda Bandy
Professional Liaison
La Leche League of Kansas

What Is La Leche League International?

Our Mission

Our mission is to help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, education, information, and encouragement and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

La Leche League is...

an organization founded in 1956 by seven women who wanted to make breastfeeding easier and more rewarding for both mother and child. The organization offers information and encouragement—primarily through personal help—to those women who want to breastfeed their babies.

International

La Leche League is active in 65 countries and territories, reaching more than 200,000 mothers monthly through a network of more than 6,700 accredited Leaders who work on a volunteer basis.

La Leche League International is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in consultative status with UNICEF, is an NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), acts as a registered Private Voluntary Organization for the Agency for International Development (USAID), is an accredited member of the US Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies Coalition, is a member of the Child Survival Collaborations and Resources Group (CORE), and is a founding

member of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA).

Mother-to-Mother

Volunteer Leaders are experienced breastfeeding mothers who have completed an accreditation program and are familiar with breastfeeding management techniques as well as current research. They offer practical information and moral support to mothers through monthly meetings and phone help.

LLL Series Meetings are informal discussion groups held in the homes of members or in other locations. Information is presented following a planned schedule of topics that cover the practical, physical, and psychological aspects of breastfeeding.

The Peer Counselor Program expands La Leche League's outreach into resource deprived communities worldwide. Program Administrators and Peer Counselors receive training in effective program management as well as mother-to-mother support and breastfeeding techniques. Peer Counselors serve in many diverse areas and ways from working within health care systems to individualized assistance. La Leche League also offers its help to those interested in establishing Breastfeeding Resource Centers in areas where there are no Leaders or Groups, as well as Corporate Lactation Support.