

Testimony on bill # 2284
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To whom it may concern:

I am speaking to you today as a proponent of this bill which will clarify the right of a lactating woman to nurse her child on demand including in public arenas. Evidence based medicine readily demonstrates that breastfeeding is by far the best nutrition for any infant. Moms who are nursing have to feed their infants frequently and on demand which may require that she feeds her infant in a public place. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently published a new policy statement in support of breastfeeding. This revised statement explains in detail the advantages of breastmilk over human milk substitutes.

Human milk has chemical properties which appear to affect infants both in the short term and potentially for the rest of their lives. In the short term, human milk helps protect the infant against infection, has a direct impact on development, and in the long term, it appears to be protective against several chronic illnesses which have been on the rise over the last several years. These effects may then, have a profound positive impact on the economy and society as a whole.

Human milk protects against a wide variety of infections, and this protection can be dynamic and ongoing as long as the infant breastfeeds. There is a wide variety of chemical components in human milk which protect against various bacteria and viruses. An example is rotavirus, a common gastrointestinal virus that causes significant morbidity every year in the U.S. Due to the protection of provided human milk, it is rare to have to admit an infant to the hospital with dehydration, which is a common complication in formula fed infants. Breastmilk also appears to lower the incidence of pneumonia, meningitis, ear infection, and hepatitis. This then results in a potential significant impact on health care costs and could lead to a drop in lost work days due to child illness.

Human milk additionally has significant effects on various chronic diseases in the infant and potential protective effects for the mother. Children who breastfeed have a lower incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, food allergies, skin allergies, diabetes both type 1 and type 2, lymphoma, leukemia, and Hodgkin's disease. Later in life these children exhibit lower incidence of obesity and hypercholesterolemia. Maternal health benefits include decreased post partum complications, especially bleeding, decreased risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and possibly decreased risk of hip fractures and osteoporosis in the post menopausal period.

In addition to the above benefits, human milk is the only infant nutrition that has been demonstrated through research to lead to advanced neurological development including slightly enhanced performance on cognitive tests, and enhanced visual acuity in infancy.

Finally, when one considers that the benefits of wide spread breastfeeding has the potential to decrease annual health care costs by 3.6 billion dollars annually, and decrease the costs of the WIC program with decreased formula use. Not to mention the fact that there would also be impacts on the environment with less burden of disposing of formula

cans, bottles and other waste products.

It is important to understand that there are some contraindications to breastfeeding. Certain types of infections and medical conditions, as well as some medications which the mother may be required to take. These cases certainly are taken case by case, and many situations can be dealt with in such a way as to allow Moms to nurse their children.

In conclusion, when one considers the overwhelming evidence in the literature, and the policy statements in support of breastfeeding by multiple medical organizations including The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Academy of Family Practice and The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology to name a few. It is imperative that we support mothers who have the desire and are dedicated to providing the best nutrition for their children. It is imperative that this committee and the legislature adopt bill #2284 to protect lactating mothers and allow them to perform one of the most natural acts mother can perform, feeding her infant. It is our responsibility as professionals and government officials to support our children as they are our future. Thank you.