



K A N S A S

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**Testimony on
House Bill 2284
to
House Health and Human Services Committee**

**Presented by: Linda Kenney
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Chairperson Morrison and members of the House HHS Committee, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is pleased to support HB 2284.

The department joins with the American Academy of Pediatrics and others in supporting public policy measures that help Kansas' mothers and families who choose to breastfeed their infants. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding of infants during the first 6 months and continued breastfeeding for a minimum of a year. How does Kansas fare when it comes to this important public health measure? When assessed at the time of hospital discharge, Kansas is doing better than the U.S. (72.2% of Kansas mothers breastfeed at hospital discharge compared to only 70.1% for the U.S.). In the first few weeks after they leave the hospital, however, there is a sharp drop in the numbers of women who breastfeed. And at 6 months, the trend is reversed, only 28.8% of Kansas' mothers breastfeed compared to 33.2% for the U.S. Less than two-thirds of low-income mothers participating in the Kansas WIC program reported any breastfeeding. The data suggest a need to build supportive community and work environments through public policy as necessary.

Studies show that breastfed infants have improved health and reduced medical costs. Breast milk lowers the risk of the baby developing asthma, ear infections, respiratory infections, and obesity. Studies show reduced Medicaid expenditures for breastfed babies of \$478 during the first six months of life. Public policy can be supportive not only of mothers and families but also of physicians, hospitals and local health departments in their efforts to promote breastfeeding. We urge you to support the bill as written. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I will be happy to answer any questions.

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