

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly Select Committee on Children in Favor of  
SB 194 AN ACT CONCERNING THE POSTPONEMENT OF JURY DUTY FOR BREASTFEEDING  
MOTHERS

March 1, 2012

Submitted by: Rachel L. Jackson

Good afternoon members of the committee, and thank you for this opportunity to present my testimony. As a current breastfeeding mother I am in favor of An Act Concerning the Postponement of Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers. I first received a jury duty summons with a date in the end of July 2011. Since I was pregnant at the time and due in the beginning of July, I called to postpone my date until March 2012. I was surprise upon inspecting the summons that the longest amount of time that I could extend my appearance date would be 10 months. While there is a physical disability disqualification, I do not feel as though pregnancy or breastfeeding qualify as a physical disability and so I did not pursue that disqualification.

When I called the Jury Administration to postpone my appearance date, I inquired about accommodations for breastfeeding mothers. Specifically, I asked if there would be an area in which I would be able to express milk for my son and if I would be able to do so 3 times during the day. The woman who I spoke to said that each court was different but that I could always go and pump in my car and that she was sure it would be fine to do that 3 times during the day. I was quite surprise by this answer, decided to follow up with the court directly, but would wait until closer to my rescheduled appearance date in March.

I recently called the Jury Administration to inquire again about accommodations for breastfeeding mothers. The woman I spoke to this time was considerably more sympathetic but still could not provide me with any more reassuring information. She recommended calling the court that I would be serving at directly since accommodations varied widely. I called the Rockville Superior Court, where I would be serving, and was told that there wasn't a dedicated space where I could express milk, but that there would probably be a room available and if not I would be escorted around the building until one could be found. When I asked if I would be able to have 3 breaks in order to pump, she said that I could go when ever I needed to. That is, unless, I was in the court room or called to serve on a jury, and then I wouldn't be able to leave the court room except for the lunch break that everyone receives.

Speaking to her made considerably more concerned about my upcoming appearance date and I began to feel an increasing amount of stress about my juror service. I worry that they will not be able to find a place for me to pump, that I will not be able to pump when I need to, that because of the uncertainty and stress I will not be able to pump the amount of milk that I need

to send for my son and that if I don't pump enough times during the day that I will end up with mastitis, which are painfully, infected milk ducts.

This is for one day of jury duty, I can't begin to imagine what would happen if I actually was called for a trial that lasted several days. If I had to sit in a court room for multiple days, I would be preoccupied with the fact that my milk supply was being compromised by my inability to express milk for my child who depends on me to provide for him. And not just compromised for the time that I would serve, but that it could potentially end my ability to breastfeed my child. This may sound like an unlikely outcome, but as a working mother who is expressing milk daily for her child while she is apart from him, it is a very real threat. Even under the best conditions milk expression can be challenging and difficult to maintain. Despite the challenges, I do it because it what is best for my son's health and my own health.

Please remove this additional hurdle for breastfeeding mothers and support An Act Concerning the Postponement of Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers.

The passage of this act may not come in time for me to take advantage of the postponement, but I hope that my testimony can help other mothers not have to make the choice between duty to their child and their state.

I am happy to fulfill my civic obligation and report for jury duty.

I only ask that I be called to do so after I have fulfilled my responsibility to my child, in providing him with best nourishment possible.

Respectfully Submitted

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