



TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE IN FAVOR OF [HB 6553, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Family Medical Leave Insurance](#)

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Good Afternoon Sen. Osten, Rep. Tercyak, Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Santiago, Ranking members and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition *in favor* of the raised HB 6553.

An overwhelming body of scientific evidence cites breastfeeding as one of the most important preventive strategies for a number of acute and chronic illnesses such as obesity for children and a lower risk of breast cancer for mothers. The health care savings of these conditions are estimated to account for \$13 billion dollars per year nationally if 90% of US families could meet the recommendations. Of the mothers giving birth in Connecticut each year, approximately 30,000 of 40,000 choose to breastfeed. By six months only 4200 are still breastfeeding in keeping with the recommendations of the CDC and all other influential professional health care groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics. Mothers and infants with the lowest breastfeeding rates are at greater risk for the aforementioned conditions among others. Generally, those at greatest risk for discontinuing breastfeeding before the recommended time are mothers with lower income and education levels and those who are African American and Hispanic. Therefore, these are the women and children who bear an unfair burden of risk for poorer health outcomes compared with all others.

In 2011, the US Surgeon General issued a report that underscored the myriad of barriers that mothers and infants face with regard to breastfeeding continuation. Among these barriers is the employment setting. With half of all mothers employed, and 2/3 of them full-time, it is no surprise that the employment sector presents an enormous challenge to breastfeeding continuation. Mothers and infants need time following birth to learn to breastfeed so that when they return to the workplace, it will be easier to continue. Numerous studies have indicated that mothers who do not lose income following birth have better breastfeeding outcomes. Without family medical leave insurance, mothers in Connecticut are forced to choose between long-term health for themselves and their children and uninterrupted income. This difficult choice appears to unfairly impact women and children already at risk for poorer health outcomes than others. Therefore, the CBC fully supports the establishment of a task force to study family medical leave insurance in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.