March 5, 2017

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Erin Wegner-Vincent and I am a registered voter in the town of Collinsville, CT. I am writing to you regarding Proposed H.B. No. 6487 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LICENSURE OF LACTATION CONSULTANTS. I am also using a breast pump while I write this. Now that I have your attention, it’s time to talk about one of my favorite people. Her name is Josephine and she was born at the beginning of November. In fact, you almost heard about her on the news. Our valet ticket at the hospital said 6:26 and she was born at 6:37. She was nearly an I-91 baby.

Unfortunately for baby Jo, not everything happened as fast for her as her entrance into the world. She had lost more weight than professionals at the hospital “like to see” when it was time for discharge. The hope was that she would start to pick up weight once we got home where it was quieter (they had not met Josephine’s older toddler sister, Adeline). You know hospitals, someone comes into your room every 10 minutes to see if the person who comes into your room every 5 minutes had been there yet. So, home we went.

Josephine continued to lose weight. I thought I was doing everything I was supposed to do. We had similar issues with our first, so I would just apply everything I knew when I worked with a Lactation Consultant before. Right? Everything would be ok, right? Josephine continued to lose weight…

I felt devastated and scared. I had learned so much and was doing so much and my baby was not thriving. Our pediatricians were supportive, but fully admitted that they are not feeding experts. They recommended that I go to a Lactation Consultant, so I went to see Susan Forrester, IBCLC. Susan was (well, still is) amazing. I think I cried through the majority of our first appointment. There is a profound feeling of failure when you cannot sustain the life that you created. Susan was able to assess what my challenges were regarding milk production and give me as many resources and supports as possible. Susan was also able to assess Josephine, and identify what her needs were and how we could best meet them.

Follow up appointments and ongoing support were crucial for Josephine and for me. Susan identified that Josephine had both a tongue tie and a lip tie that had been missed by staff in the hospital as well as her pediatricians. She also was able to identify that Josephine was having trouble with range of motion due most likely to her expedited delivery discussed earlier. She provided referrals and resources for both. She also tried what I am guessing to be every feeding and bottle device possible to see what could best help Josephine in staying healthy and hydrated. I cannot imagine where my family would be without the support of our IBCLC. I accessed support at an incredibly vulnerable time for myself and my baby. Due to unpaid maternity leave, it was also incredibly helpful that our appointments with Susan were covered by insurance. The idea that someone could be entrusted to fulfill such a critical role that requires advanced assessment for both mother and baby as well as ongoing support, referrals, and resources without the appropriate education and licensure is unethical and reckless at best. Please continue to protect the health and safety of mothers and children.

Respectfully,

Erin Wegner-Vincent and Baby Jo