

# Support HB 7165 Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage for Donor Breast Milk

49 Vista Avenue  
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Good Afternoon

My name is Di Masters

I am here because I wrote the original language for this bill which was introduced by Rep. John Frey asking that Medicaid cover the cost for Human Donor Breast Milk and I am here to ask that you give your attention and full support to HB 7165. I fully support Bill Number 7165: An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage for Donor Breast Milk.

I returned to graduate school to finish my Masters in Public Health. During my research, I discovered a gap in coverage, health equity, and maternal and infant wellness that could and should be addressed, which has an impact on our most fragile citizens. Some premature babies in our state are being denied the nutrition that they can digest, human donor milk, because hospitals cannot afford the costs. When these fragile infants are fed complex and commercial formula, they are being exposed to painful, and life threatening disease because of complications. They are underdeveloped and they can't digest the stuff. All of these tiny infants should have food that they can tolerate, but there is more to this story to understand.

Connecticut has infant and maternal health statistics, especially among minority populations that must be addressed, and this bill is part of the solution. With infant mortality among black infants well over twice the rate of white infants, and maternal mortality rates for black mothers also shamefully out of proportion, and knowing that a black mother is statistically more likely to prematurely deliver her infant, we need to begin to put in place good, simple solutions when we find them, and as soon as we can. This Bill will help to improve quality of life, reduce morbidity and mortality among the preterm population and result in a positive cost benefit analysis.

As modern technologies advance, the babies who are born very preterm have increased possibilities for survival. These vulnerable infants are in critical need of human milk to further protect their survival, health, and development.

Women who deliver preterm have not experienced the physiologic and hormonal changes of a full-term gestation and, therefore, typically require additional support to begin producing milk

(12.4%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives (10.2%), Hispanics (10.1%), whites (8.4%) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (8.2%) (Kothari et al., 2016; Purisch & Gyamfi-Bannerman, 2017).