

Dear Senator John Fonfara, Representative Jason Rojas, Senator Kevin Witkos, Representative Chris Davis, and all members of the Finance Committee,

A fellow mother and advocate for breastfeeding wrote you the following letter which I note below and highly agree with. Please review her statement in addition to mine.

*“Exempting breastfeeding supplies from the sales and use tax will allow more women to be able to afford these critical supplies, which are necessary for women who wish to breastfeed when they return to the workforce. Furthermore, other essential items for babies like diapers and formula are exempt from the sales and use tax, and several other states exempt breastfeeding supplies from the sales tax.*

*For women who wish to breastfeed in the workplace, the benefits can be extremely beneficial to the health of the mother and the child. In fact, one of the most effective preventative measures a mother can take to protect the health of her baby and herself is to breastfeed. Babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop infections, allergies, asthma, cancers, and a range of other health issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, breastfeeding is a key tool to improve public health. Breastfeeding has also been shown to lower the risk of breast and ovarian cancer for the mother. Due to these benefits, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that women attempt to exclusively breastfeed for at least the first six months of a baby’s life and the World Health Organization recommends breastfeeding up to two years or as long as mutually desired by the mother and baby thereafter.*

*Despite the recommendation to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2014 Breastfeeding Report Card](#), “seventy nine percent of newborns started to breastfeed in 2011, though just half of all infants were breastfeeding at six months and a little over a quarter at twelve months.” Furthermore, recent research has linked breastfeeding rates to income levels and socioeconomic status, as [“seventy four percent of children in families with incomes above 185 percent of the federal poverty line are breastfed, compared to only 57 percent of children in families with incomes at or below that threshold.”](#) These statistics are troubling and unfair, as every mother should be able to make the choice as to whether or not to breastfeed her baby and be supported by her workplace, regardless of her income level.*

*These policy proposals will better support women who wish to breastfeed in the workplace, thereby supporting the health of women and families across Connecticut as well as encourage more women to re-enter the workforce. When workplaces are not supportive of women during the pregnancy and post labor stage, this contributes to women dropping out of the work force, lower wages, more turnover among workers, less productivity, higher rates of stress and depression among women, and negative health outcomes for newborn babies. These measures will not only improve public health, but they will benefit our economy overall. Thank you for your consideration.”*

*I was fortunate enough to breastfeed my first daughter for 15 months and now my second. If it weren’t for my ability to acquire a reliable and affordable breast pump and*

*supplies which I used tirelessly after returning to work full time postpartum, I would not have been able to supply my child with the health benefits from my breast milk and thus falling victim to yet another statistic of women who could no longer maintain breastfeeding due to various environmental impacts impeding their ability to nurse or pump.*

*Many people do not realize that pumping through use of a breast pump is also considered breastfeeding. Breast milk from the mother either from the breast or the bottle is no different. For me, being able to breast feed is a job in itself with around the clock commitment however it is a selfless act that I give my children to benefit them for a lifetime. The cost of breastfeeding supplies is not cheap, even for a working mother. From bottles, to nipple sizes that vary depending on child, flow, and age, milk storage bags, breast pumps and parts which wear over time and need to be replaced to maintain adequate pumping and removal of milk, proper ice packs and carrying cases to keep the pumped milk at a safe temperature to last the day before returning home, along with proper cleaning supplies, amongst so many other necessities for pumping adds up to say the least. So please take into serious considering my request that you exempt these supplies from the sales and use tax. And also, please know by doing so, you will be helping countless mothers provide a gift to their children not otherwise possible without your help!*

*I urge you on behalf of myself, fellow mothers, and soon-to-be mothers for generations to come in CT, that you pass this critical piece of legislation to help benefit CT mothers and children. Your decision counts and can make a world of difference for so many who can benefit from the exemption of sales and use tax regarding breastfeeding supplies. Through you, my voice will be heard. And I thank you for your hard work, consideration, and dedication to helping mothers and children across this state!*

*Sincerely, a breastfeeding mother and advocate,*

*Angela Barbieri*