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Testimony **in favor** of H.B. 5109 AN ACT EXEMPTING BREASTFEEDING SUPPLIES FROM THE SALES AND USE TAXES.

Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of H.B. 5109: AN ACT EXEMPTING BREASTFEEDING SUPPLIES FROM THE SALES AND USE TAXES. As you know, in Connecticut, several maternal and infant products, including breastmilk substitute (formula), diapers, and feminine hygiene products, are tax-exempt. However, items essential to breastfeeding (e.g., breast pumps, breastmilk storage containers, breast shields) do not receive this cost- saving benefit.

Physicians and public health experts continue to recommend, encourage and try to support families to exclusively breastfeed their infants for the first six months of life. Many parents must return to work prior to that time point. If they are to continue to provide the healthiest food for their baby, most must pump breastmilk while at work. The supplies needed to provide that milk are essential and should be treated as such by exempting from sales and use taxes.

Most people are not aware that milk must be removed from the breast at regular intervals for milk to be continually made. If milk is not pumped while the parent is away from their baby the milk supply will diminish and eventually end. This simple fact of physiology makes pumping milk while at work an essential task for parents who return to work while breastfeeding their infant.

Epidemiologists have estimated that suboptimal breastfeeding, that is breastfeeding less than 6 months, costs our nation at least 13 billion dollars each year (Bartick & Reinhold, 2010). This cost is the result of infant deaths, illnesses, missed work and long-term complications such as cancer. The reduction in tax revenue as a result of this bill would easily be returned to our state in the health care savings and lives saved.

Providing tax exempt breastfeeding equipment and supplies is a support strategy that can result in increased breastfeeding duration rates, infant growth rates, lower infant morbidity and mortality rates, reduced health disparities, and cost-savings.

The Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition is willing to lend its expertise to working with the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee on this bill and we thank the legislators who have sponsored it.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica J Belyea".

Monica J Belyea, MPH, RD