

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

I am a local Ob-Gyn and lactation consultant, and I see first hand the effects of how state legislation affects my patients. I thank you for your consideration in this matter. I regret that I am not able to testify in person as I have patients scheduled, but please consider the points below as they are the same that I would have testified about in person.

Firstly, breastfeeding has multiple benefits for the mother and infant. For the mother, breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the risks of breast and ovarian cancer and lowers the lifetime risk of multiple chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and obesity. For the child, breastfeeding lowers the rate of infections, allergies, asthma, cancer and a range of other health issues. The benefits of breastfeeding are supported by the CDC, WHO, the surgeon general, and countless other national and international medical organizations.

Secondly, we already support tax exemption for foods for human consumption, medical supplies, diapers, formula, and even seeds that could produce food for human consumption. Including breastfeeding supplies in these exemptions makes logical sense as we are both creating food for human consumption and improving health outcomes. The current situation of not exempting these products actually leads to possibly dissuading mothers from breastfeeding through a financial disincentive.

Thirdly, there are financial benefits to the state and the economy to encouraging breastfeeding. These exemptions would cover supplies that are required for a breastfeeding mom to return to the workforce. When women are not supported during the post-labor stage this contributes to women dropping out the work force, lower wages, increased turnover among workers, and lowered productivity. Once back in the workforce, breastfeeding leads to fewer health insurance claims, less employee time off to care for sick children, and higher productivity.

For these reasons, I implore you to consider placing a tax exemption on breastfeeding supplies. This will help to improve the health of our local Nutmeggers as well as the health of our economy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jacqueline Calvo, MD, FACOG, IBCLC

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Jacqueline Calvo

Ob-Gyn Physician