

My Scan

Thank you for the pleasure of speaking before you today.

Fact: Seeds that can be planted and grown into food for human consumption are tax exempt.

I am Jan Ferraro and I reside in North Branford. I came into breastfeeding over thirty years ago after the birth of my first daughter. Since then I have become a childbirth educator, certified lactation counselor and parenting educator. Every single day since February 21, 1989 I have in one way or another worked within the breastfeeding community. And at the end of March I will start a new position as I will become a grandmother, so I am still firmly planted in this breastfeeding community.

Currently I am the Director of Education for Acelleron Medical Products. It is my job to make sure that every family who chooses to breastfeed gets the proper breast pump to fit her needs. Frankly, all the pumps suck, that is what they are meant to do. But they all do it a bit differently. Working with the mom we review her options and help her in selecting just the right pump. The work does not end there. It is not simply here is your pump and now you can breastfeed, and everything is taken care of. This is the beginning of their journey. Over the time she breastfeeds and after the pump has been delivered moms will need a variety of supplies to keep going. From milk storage bags to breast pads to replacement parts for their pumps.

While I do make it my business to take care of all moms in CT, since I have had this job with Acelleron I have focused on the Medicaid and WIC population. They are my soft spot. They are more often overlooked and underserved. When I first started going to the community health centers and WIC offices, I can remember the incredulous look of so many of the health care providers when I said I was there to help their moms get breast pumps. Help them? Nobody ever came to them offering to help moms get what they needed. My goal was to level the playing field. If privately insured moms had all these options and such ease in getting what they needed, Medicaid moms should as well.

The stereotypical belief is that this segment of society is lazy, nonworking, near do wells looking for their free handout. I am here to tell you they are not. They are hardworking families trying to make it work with multiple low paying jobs, unexpected unemployment, sometimes they themselves are chronically ill or have children with chronic illnesses. They are wondering how to keep food on the table, heat their homes, keep the lights on, pay the rent, all of it. Have you ever been there, in that place? Trying to do the right thing for your children and your wallet says no way? Do you remember how defeated you felt? Do you remember saying if I could just find the money to pay this, rent, electric, you fill in the blanks, I could stay afloat for another few days. If you have never known this feeling, that's wonderful, but if you have, just take a moment and put yourself-back there. Go back and remember that time where every single penny counted. Where you would just look over all that was in front of you, bills, collection notices, late fees and thought why can't I just catch a break. How do I know what they are going through? Let me introduce myself, I am Jan Ferraro former WIC client and Medicaid patient. Believe me...I know.

So, when I see these families who decide to do what is best and choose to breastfeed, it simply baffles me as to why we would tax the very things they need to do so. When they are counting every penny, we are adding to their shortfall by taxing their breast pump, breast pump parts and breastfeeding supplies. When they are trying so hard to break the cycle of poverty by working 3 jobs, we are adding to their troubles to make ends meet by taxing their breast pump, breast pump parts and breastfeeding supplies. When they are trying to keep their babies as healthy as possible by providing them with breast

milk, we are adding to their struggle to do so by taxing their breast pump, breast pump parts and breastfeeding supplies. Go back to your young, struggling self, remember how every – single – penny - counted.

How will it all wash out? It's usually due to pure defeat that the best decision that they made for their babies, to breastfeed, comes to a grinding halt. The food was free as their bodies made it. They were more than likely able to afford the breastfeeding supplies and the parts. But the straw that broke the camel's back was not being able to afford the parts and supplies since they were taxed. That few dollars was instead needed to be allocated to pay the rent, the utilities, the necessities for their life. Hard as they tried to make it work it is simply not affordable when we are taxing them to death. So, what happens next? They get formula supplied free by the State via WIC. Each year CT WIC spends millions of dollars on formula. Imagine the savings to be had on formula in the State of CT if we just made breast pumps, pump parts and breastfeeding supplies tax exempt. Imagine the savings in Medicaid healthcare costs as studies have proven that breastfed babies spend less time in doctor's offices and hospitals. Imagine CT businesses thriving with a hardy workforce as moms of breastfed babies who are healthy have reduced absenteeism and continue to work and businesses in turn will have lower turnover rate. The dollar amount lost in CT on sales tax on these items will be quickly replaced by the savings in formula, healthcare and business 10 times over.

Making breast pumps breast pump parts and breastfeeding supplies tax exempt makes good sense for moms, babies, families and businesses in CT. It is logical and sensible. I respectfully urge you to support this bill.

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Thank you