



Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast

Share the Health

27 February, 2020

Dear members of the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on behalf of the Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast (MMBNE) in favor of HB 5109 An Act Exempting Breastfeeding Supplies from the Sales and Use Taxes.

MMBNE is a nonprofit organization providing pasteurized donor human milk to premature hospitalized babies throughout the Northeast. Mothers who have more milk than their babies need pump and donate the milk to MMBNE to be tested, pasteurized and dispense primarily to fragile, premature babies whose mothers do not have sufficient milk supply. We serve ten hospitals in Connecticut, and numerous families at home. We also partner with medical facilities, business and non profit organizations who host 7 donor milk depots (drop off sites) in Connecticut. Since 2011, over 750 Connecticut mothers have volunteered for screening as milk donors.

In Connecticut, several maternal and infant products, including formula, diapers, and feminine hygiene products are tax-exempt. However, products needed for mothers to pump milk for their babies; manual and electric breast pumps, breast milk storage containers, breast shields, valves and membranes, power adapter/battery pack, flanges, tubing, pump bag, bottle cooler bag, and hands-free bra do not receive this cost- saving benefit. The lost tax revenue to the state will be more than compensated in:

1. **Health care costs:** Research over decades has taught us that formula fed babies have more ear and respiratory infections requiring doctor visits, medication and sometimes hospitalization. Long-term effects include greater obesity, diabetes and leukemia in formula fed babies. Mothers who do not breastfeed are more likely to have breast and uterine cancer in their lives.
2. **Increased productivity:** Because of these health outcomes, working parents of formula fed babies miss more work to care for their sick babies.

The cost-savings of tax-exempt breastfeeding equipment and supplies will strengthen the economy of the state of Connecticut and the health and

productivity of its citizen. It will also support and protect breastfeeding, increase breastfeeding, infant growth and health, reduce infant morbidity, mortality and health disparities, and save both the state and families money.

The Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast would not be able to provide life saving and health promoting donor milk to the premature and fragile babies of Connecticut and beyond without the generous donations of mothers who pump milk beyond their own babies' needs to help others. This includes mothers of premature babies, mothers of healthy babies and mothers whose babies have tragically died. We request that this tax exemption apply to all mothers who are pumping, whether or not the baby is alive or in their care. Fortunately, very few mothers experience this. Supporting their needs and their selfless donation to help others will benefit the mothers themselves and countless fragile babies who will receive their life saving gift.

Thank your for your consideration of this important and fair law. Feel free to call upon us to address any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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