

Dear Senator and all members of the Finance Committee,

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 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.

Catherine Valencia