

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5158

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING BREASTFEEDING IN THE WORKPLACE.

Vote Date: 2/18/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/9/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Many businesses do not provide adequate areas for breastfeeding mothers to express their milk.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None submitted.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

ALISE P., TERRYVILLE, CT RESIDENT

Her testimony told of her experience as a nursing mother while working in a hospital lab. She was told to pump breastmilk in the bathroom, which she said is against the law. She was told to "punch out" of work every time. To avoid infection caused by not pumping, she had to pump twice during a 4-6 hour shift. Each time was for 15 - 30 minutes. Nursing mothers who were employed as nurses did not have to punch out. When she contacted human resources, she was told there were different policies for each department. She eventually had to quit her job.

BRIAN ANDERSON, LEGISLATIVE COORDINATOR, COUNCIL 4, AFSME

Many women in low income jobs do not have the ability to take sufficient time off to bond with their babies. Physically and mentally healthy children is a goal that benefits our society.

CHRO, COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHRO suggests the bill be amended to include language defining "reasonable break time". The pandemic we are experiencing identified concerns of virtual contamination of the breastmilk. This is an issue that can be addressed by providing a well-ventilated room. The language referring to 'no undue hardship' is unnecessary since this already exists in the current statute.

BEVERLY BREAKMAN, REGIONAL DIRECTOR UNITED AUTO WORKERS, REGION A

One of the hardest decisions a new mother faces is whether to return to work. Medical experts agree breastfeeding benefits the health of both mother and baby, and they recommend doing this for at least 6 months to the first year. Many employers don't offer a clean, private place or the electrical outlets necessary to operate breast pumps. If not expressed frequently, the body's ability to produce milk decreases and causes intense pain as well as the risk for infection. If employers provided a safe, clean and private space for working new mothers, they would find these experienced employees would be more apt to return to work.

SUSAN EASTWOOD, BOARD MEMBER, PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

This bill improves the current law by requiring employers to provide a private space, have an electrical outlet for breast pumps, and a refrigerator to store the milk. By deciding to breastfeed, there are many health benefits for both mother and baby. We must remove barriers that make it difficult for these mothers.

MADELINE GRANATO, POLICY DIRECTOR, CT WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND LEGAL FUND (CWEALF)

Breastfeeding provides numerous benefits not only for the child, but also reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer and types of diabetes. Many low-income and women of color still lack the support needed to continue breastfeeding their children. Many must return to work soon after giving birth. The current law requires employers to allow sufficient time to express breastmilk. This bill strengthens existing practices. Parents should not have to choose between breastfeeding and continuing to work to support their families.

LIZ GUSTAFSON, STATE DIRECTOR, NARAL, PRO-CHOICE

More advantaged mothers have already met or exceeded the goals associated with breastfeeding, but low-income, and women of color, lack the support needed. This is also an issue of racial and economic justice. The decision to breastfeed often depends heavily on workplace environments. We must support those who are making this investment in their children.

AMANDA KALLENLL, CT SECTION, ACOG

They recommend all workplaces adopt policies to promote supportive environments for women who are breastfeeding. Policies are required that enable women to incorporate breastfeeding into their daily lives. and in the workplace, including sufficient break time and a clean, private location for expressing milk.

KELLY McCONNAY MOORE, INTERN, SENIOR POLICY COUNCIL, ACLU UNION OF CT

The bill's requirements for an adequate pumping place for expressing milk, privacy, access to cold storage and an electrical outlet, all support breastfeeding parents and make it more likely they will return to work. The bill is strengthened further by removing the gender pronouns and replacing them with gender-neutral pronouns since nonbinary people and trans men also breastfeed. Protecting the right to breastfeed is a fundamental decision necessary for reproductive justice.

POLLY MORAN, CERTIFIED NURSE-MIDWIFE, LEGISLATIVE LIASON OF CT, AFFILIATE OF AMERICAN COLLEGE OF NURSE MIDWIVES

She has practiced nurse-midwifery for over 25 years and has been dedicated to promoting healthy decision-making. The benefits of breastfeeding are well documented. There are numerous economic benefits for both employers and employees. Access to better protections for all nursing women can help ease disparities and help reach the goals set by the Surgeon General in 2010.

MICHELLE NOEHREM, SELF

She applauds the committee's goals for modernizing the current breastfeeding in the workplace statute. These changes will help breastfeeding employees have the space, privacy and mechanics they need.

GRETCHEN RAFFA, SENIOR DIRECTOR, PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

As advocates for reproductive freedom, they testified their concerns about all aspects of a woman's life, including those that affect her economic stability. The USA has one of the lowest breastfeeding initiation rates among industrialized nations. Women with children are the fastest growing segments of the workforce. Balancing work and family are an important priority for all employees. Nearly 2 of 3 infants are not exclusively breastfed for the recommended 6 months. This rate has not changed in 20 years. There is a disparity among who actually is breastfeeding, with 85% of white mothers and 69% of black mothers. Many low wage employees cannot afford to take extended leave to care for a new baby. Everything possible should be done to make caring for children easier.

RAY ROSSOMANDO, DIRECTOR OF POLICY, CT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

They commend the work already done on this issue. but recommended much more be done to address the problems of mothers who are teachers. Teachers can't take breaks at times of their choice or choose when to take lunch, which is often spent with children. As a result, 1/4 of the teacher surveys said finding a time and place to express milk was difficult. They suggest adding language for addressing these concerns further.

KATE FARRAR, STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 20 ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
CAROLINE SIMMONS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 114TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Their testimony said despite recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to breastfeed for at least the first 6 months of a baby's life, 79% of moms start breastfeeding but that number drops to 57% at 6 months and just 25% stop at 12 months. Research has linked breastfeeding rates to income levels and socioeconomic status. It is troubling and unfair. The new provisions in this bill will not only improve public health but will benefit the economy as well.

STACY ZIMMERMAN, SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

He supports all the agenda items. Passage of these bills would stabilize workplaces and address both long-standing and COVID-19 related employee issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No opposition testimony was submitted

Reported by: Marie Knudsen, Assistant Clerk

Date: 3/7/2021