

Healthy People 2020 Testimony
Philadelphia
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My name is Marsha Walker. I am a registered nurse and international board certified lactation consultant. I am representing the US Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA), the professional association of more than 3700 lactation consultants who provide a large percentage of the professional support for breastfeeding mothers in the US. USLCA applauds the leaders of HP2020 for retaining the Maternal, Infant, and Child Health topic area as this is a unique period of time during which the foundation is laid down for lifelong health. Within this topic area, breastfeeding sits as a cross-cutting objective with the potential to positively influence over 10% of all of the other objectives contained with the Healthy People document. I call it the 1-10-100 connection: 1 health behavior (breastfeeding) has the potential to positively influence over 10% of the HP2020 objectives for almost 100% of infants born in the US each year. I know of no other single health behavior that has the strength to so robustly direct health outcomes in so many areas.

USLCA is pleased that breastfeeding objectives are included in the HP2020 draft document, especially the proposed three new ones. In order for the existing breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity objectives to be met, effective support, or an infrastructure of supportive interventions are necessary. The 3 new objectives represent evidence-based effective interventions that are known to specifically increase rates of initiation, duration, and exclusivity of breastfeeding.

MICH HP2020-26 Increase the percentage of employers who have worksite lactation programs: Over half of the mothers with children under 1 year of age are in the workforce. Return to employment is one of the leading reasons for the avoidance or abandonment of breastfeeding. However, breastfeeding mothers are good for employers

- One day absences to care for sick children occur more than twice as often in mothers of formula-feeding infants
- Absenteeism can cost more than 15% of a company's base payroll and up to \$775 per employee
- Breastfeeding lowers insurance claims for businesses. One study showed that for every 1000 babies not breastfed, there were over 2000 extra physician visits, 212 extra hospitalization days, and 609 extra prescriptions for just 3 common childhood illnesses
- Investing in a company lactation program can result in a 3 for 1 dollar return on investment
- Companies with lactation programs enjoy an 80-90% retention rate of their maternity workforce. Employee turnover can cost \$50,000 to replace a \$50,000 employee

MICH HP2020-27 Decrease the percentage of breastfed newborns who receive formula supplementation within the first 2 days of life and,

MICH HP2020-28 Increase the percentage of live births that occur in facilities that provide recommended care for lactating mothers and their babies

Both of these relate to hospital practices and are extremely important. The Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC) Survey conducted by the CDC in 2007 showed that birth facilities in most states are not providing maternity care that is fully supportive of breastfeeding, with some practices being quite detrimental. For example, 24% of facilities supplemented over half of breastfed babies, a practice known to reduce duration and exclusivity of breastfeeding. The Joint Commission has recently added exclusive breastmilk feeding upon discharge as part of its Perinatal Core Measure set, recognizing the importance that breastfed infants not be supplemented unless medically necessary.

We urge HP2020 to adopt the 3 new breastfeeding objectives as an effective mechanism to improve lactation support services in the hospital that includes an effective lactation consultant-to-patient ratio along with breastfeeding policies supportive of breastfeeding. Worksite support of breastfeeding will reduce discrimination and harassment at the worksite and prevent a mother from having to choose between putting food on the table and breastfeeding her baby.

We feel that breastfeeding is of such fundamental importance that it should be a national priority objective and we thank the HP2020 leaders for the opportunity to testify today.

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