



2501 Aerial Center Parkway, Suite 103  
Morrisville, NC 27560  
Phone: 919.861.4543  
Fax: 919.459.2075  
[www.uslcaonline.org](http://www.uslcaonline.org)  
[info@uslcaonline.org](mailto:info@uslcaonline.org)

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Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) would like to express our strong support for the breastfeeding support provision (Sec. 4207) in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This section states that:

An employer shall provide— “a reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk; and “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk. “An employer shall not be required to compensate an employee receiving reasonable break time under paragraph (1) for any work time spent for such purpose. “An employer that employs less than 50 employees shall not be subject to the requirements of this subsection, if such requirements would impose an undue hardship by causing the employer significant difficulty or expense when considered in relation to the size, financial resources, nature, or structure of the employer’s business. “Nothing in this subsection shall preempt a State law that provides greater protections to employees than the protections provided for under this subsection.”

Human milk is the optimal source of nutrition for infants, with a significant body of research demonstrating the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child. Section 4207 will provide women returning to work with safe, sanitary conditions and reasonable break time to express breast milk, providing the best possible nutrition for their infants. This support is needed to enable mothers and children to achieve the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendations of exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continued breastfeeding for the first year of life and beyond. Currently, 24 states have laws related to breastfeeding in the workplace, but they are not uniform or mandated, resulting in a haphazard approach to support for working mothers.

As you know, the evidence for the value of breastfeeding to children’s *and* women’s health is scientific, solid, and continually being reaffirmed by new research. Compared with formula-fed children, those who are breastfed have a lower incidence of ear, skin, stomach, and respiratory infections; diarrhea; sudden infant death syndrome; and necrotizing enterocolitis. In the longer term, breastfed children have a lower incidence of obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia. Women who breastfed their children have a reduced incidence of diabetes, breast and ovarian cancers, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease.

Employers are sometimes reluctant to facilitate break time or provide accommodations for mothers to pump milk. While initially Section 4207 may appear to increase the cost of doing business, breastfeeding support in the workplace actually saves money and is quite cost effective. 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 health 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, 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, an important consideration in these difficult economic times
- Companies with lactation programs enjoy an 80-90% retention rate of their maternity workforce, especially important considering that more than 50% of women with infants less than one year old are in the labor force
- Employee turnover can cost \$50,000 to replace a \$50,000 employee

Not only is workplace breastfeeding support necessary, it requires few resources, and ultimately saves money! The future prosperity of our country greatly depends on the productivity of women, as workers *and* as mothers. Women's economic security and the health of mothers and families translate directly into the potential of our future workforce and the vigor of our economy.

We commend you for supporting breastfeeding in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. We urge you to retain Section 4207 as a cost effective business proposition with a 3 for 1 return on investment and as an approach to a healthy current and future workforce. We applaud your ongoing work to provide quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

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