

From: United States Breastfeeding Committee <office@usbreastfeeding.org>

To: PatIBCLC@aol.com

Subject: Workplace Breastfeeding Support Provision in Health Care Reform

Date: Thu, Apr 1, 2010 2:34 pm



United States Breastfeeding
COMMITTEE
PROTECTING • PROMOTING • SUPPORTING

**April 1, 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT

Megan Renner

301-807-4963 (cell)

mrenner@usbreastfeeding.org

USBC Applauds Workplace Breastfeeding Support Provision in Health Care Reform

Washington, DC--The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) applauds the passage of health care reform package, in particular, the workplace breastfeeding support provision in the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#). The provision states that employers shall provide reasonable, unpaid break time and a private, non-bathroom place for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child's birth. Employers with less than 50 employees are not subject to the requirement if it would cause "undue hardship."

USBC Chair, Joan Younger Meek, MD, MS, RD, IBCLC, applauds the legislation's recognition of breastfeeding as a major preventive health care strategy. "Mothers, babies, and employers all win with breastfeeding support," says Dr. Meek. "[Research clearly demonstrates the value of breastfeeding](#) for the health of women and children, and medical experts agree with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in recommending exclusive breastfeeding for months and continued breastfeeding for the first year of life and beyond. But returning to work can be a major hurdle for new mothers struggling to balance working and breastfeeding without the simple support measures this law ensures."

Although many are aware of the health benefits of breastfeeding, employers may not recognize the economic benefits that accrue to them also. [The Business Case for Breastfeeding](#), published in 2008 by DHHS, demonstrates an impressive return on investment for employers that provide workplace lactation support, including lower health care costs, absenteeism, and turnover rates. Employees whose companies provide breastfeeding support consistently report improved morale, better satisfaction with their jobs, and higher productivity. As part of *The Business Case for Breastfeeding* initiative, [coalitions in 32 states and territories received training](#) to assist employers in establishing lactation support programs.

Dr. Meek says it takes little for a company to provide lactation support. Basic needs include a clean place to express milk in privacy and break time to express milk approximately every 3 hours during the work period. A model law in Oregon defines reasonable time for milk expression as 30 minutes.

for every four hours worked; a good match between natural breastfeeding cycles and the rhythm of the workday. Meek adds that a growing number of companies across the United States offer worksite lactation programs that also include access to information and professional support from a lactation consultant or other health experts.

Currently, [24 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia](#) have legislation related to breastfeeding in the workplace. The new federal provision will provide a minimum level of support in all states, but it will not preempt a state law that provides stronger protections. "This looks to be a strong legal provision, providing for and protecting nursing mothers in the workplace," says labor and employment attorney Thomas Doyle, JD, of Portland's Bennett Hartman Morris and Kaplan. "The implementation of this law will help women care for their babies while contributing to the U.S. workforce."

After championing the most detailed of the state workplace support laws in Oregon (passed in 2007), U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley introduced "Reasonable Break Time for Nursing Mothers" as an amendment to the Senate HELP Committee's health reform bill last year. Amelia Psmythe, Director of the Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon, celebrates Senator Merkley's impact on shifting the paradigm to recognize that: "Breastfeeding is the natural outcome of pregnancy, and workplace support is the natural outcome of a society where the majority of mothers and babies are separated due to work."

Although the law was effective immediately upon President Obama's signing of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, the U.S. Department of Labor must now work to define terms and enforcement procedures. USBC will be closely monitoring and supporting this process and stands ready to support employers and breastfeeding employees with tools, information, and resources. Employers, human resources managers, and breastfeeding employees who are interested in helping to establish worksite lactation programs at their place of employment can find additional information and [Frequently Asked Questions on the USBC Web site](#).

For more information and to access copies of *The Business Case for Breastfeeding* resources, visit [The National Women's Health Information Center](#). To locate health care providers and knowledgeable breastfeeding support personnel that can offer assistance and answer questions about breastfeeding, visit the [Breastfeeding FAQs page on the USBC Web site](#).

USBC is an organization of organizations. Opinions expressed by USBC are not necessarily the position of all member organizations and opinions expressed by USBC member organization representatives are not necessarily the position of USBC.

United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC)

The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) is an independent nonprofit coalition of 41 nationally influential professional, educational, and governmental organizations. Representing over half a million concerned professionals and the families they serve, USBC and its member organizations share a common mission to improve the Nation's health by working collaboratively to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding. For more information about USBC, visit www.usbreastfeeding.org.

###

United States Breastfeeding Committee
2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202/367-1132
Fax: 202/367-2132
E-mail: office@usbreastfeeding.org
Web: www.usbreastfeeding.org

[Unsubscribe from future USBC communications](#)