

Representative Anne Gonzales
HB 13 Sponsor Testimony

Good Morning Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding House Bill 13 a bill which will permit a prospective juror who is a mother who is breast-feeding her baby to be excused from jury service.

The need for this legislation was brought to my attention after a constituent who was summoned for jury duty sought an excuse to care for their new child. She stated that she was still breastfeeding and needed to either be provided some time to pump during the trial or she would need to be dismissed because of a “physical hardship.” Her request was denied and she was selected to serve on the jury. The commissioner tried to accommodate her need to pump but she was provided a coat closet which offered little privacy for her.

Nearly 20 states already provide nursing mothers a temporary reprieve from serving on jury duty. This bill takes these exceptions and codifies them. The bill modifies our current process for jury excusal by adding a division under the section defining “undue or extreme physical or financial hardship,” which explicitly says that the fact that a mother is breastfeeding may cause a physical hardship to the mother. This new division is similar to other reasons for excusal like, a mother is unable to find a childcare provider or the potential juror is suffering from a disease or illness. A signed affidavit will be satisfactory documentation to support the mother’s claim, which is similar to law in other states.

This is a simple solution to the problem my constituent faced and I would ask for your support of this legislation. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your time to consider this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.