



Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance – *Human Milk for Human Health*

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Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance (OBA)

Ann Davis, OBA Secretary and Member-at-Large for La Leche League of Ohio

Jill Davis, OBA Region 4 Representative, IBCLC

Proponent Testimony on Behalf of House Bill 513

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of House Bill 513, presented by Representative Anne Gonzales, which will clarify that parents who are breastfeeding can be exempt from jury duty, in light of the hardship that not being able to breastfeed during jury service imposes on both the parent and the infant.

In order to improve the health of the people of Ohio, breastfeeding is encouraged by the Ohio Department of Health, following the recommendations of the US Department of Health and Human Services, the United States Surgeon General, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Ohio Chronic Disease Collaborative. Interruptions to breastfeeding without adequate accommodation and support can bring an early end to the breastfeeding relationship, affecting the short- and long-term health of both the breastfeeding parent and infant. Since breastfeeding protects an infant's developing immune system, and helps to prevent diseases such as asthma, SIDS, diabetes, and childhood cancers, any effort to support and preserve breastfeeding helps to improve Ohio's infant mortality rate, currently the 6th worst in the nation, and 23% above the national average.

OBA often hears from families seeking support for situations where their ability to continue to breastfeed is threatened, including having to respond to jury duty summons. The conflicts for these families are generally of two types: managing a sudden change to the needs of their baby who nurses at the breast, and managing the need to maintain their milk supply while fulfilling their civic duty. In the first instance, if a baby is fully feeding at the breast, it may be very difficult to introduce another feeding method such as using bottles. In addition, that feeding method may have a detrimental impact on the continuation of the breastfeeding relationship, leading to early weaning. In the second instance, maintaining a supply of breastmilk while a breastfeeding parent and infant are separated can be complicated and difficult unless adequate accommodations are made for the mother's need to express breastmilk often during the separation. Those accommodations would need to include breaks of at least every 2-3 hours, a setting that provides privacy, electricity, cleanliness, and space to accommodate pumping equipment, and adequate time to go to and from a provided location, set up, pump milk, and clean up before returning to the courtroom.

In the early weeks after a baby's birth, when a mother and infant are recovering and figuring out their new partnership, breastfeeding takes place many times a day, at least 10-14 times during a 24 hour period. Most babies continue to breastfeed almost as often up until and beyond six months of age, the recommended time to introduce complimentary foods that begin to vary the diet of the baby. Thus,

during the first year of life, a breastfeeding mother will need to either breastfeed or to pump breastmilk frequently each day, usually every 2-3 hours. Often the breastfeeding relationship continues into the second and third year of life, and this is supported by recommendations from the UN World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics as beneficial to the health of both parent and child.

If a breastfeeding parent is unable to express breastmilk when separated from baby, she risks becoming overly full, or engorged, with milk, and developing medical complications such as painful plugged ducts, or infections such as mastitis. In employment settings, the US Department of Labor sets forth rules which mandate accommodations for employees who are breastfeeding to be able to comfortably and privately express breastmilk, supporting the continuation of breastfeeding when one resumes work. In the court setting, interruptions to the work of the court involve more than one person. Therefore, breaks for pumping become a burden on the entire court, rather than just one person, as in other work settings. While we encourage the court to accommodate the need for pumping by breastfeeding parents, because of the needs of court employees and legal staff as well as jurors and witnesses, we recognize the need of the court to balance its work load with the needs of those in the court. Providing an exemption for breastfeeding parents can help the courts keep this balance.

If a mother has been exclusively feeding at the breast, and not pumping, adapting to this routine is another hurdle to overcome. Successfully using a breast pump is not always a skill learned quickly, nor are all mothers equally able to be successful using a pump to remove milk and maintain their supply. Again, support and accommodation are crucial to breastfeeding success in the face of individual challenges. Specifying that breastfeeding be considered a reason for exemption from jury duty is a way to provide support for the health and well-being of breastfeeding infants and mothers, and will provide guidance to courts in understanding the potential impact of jury duty on breastfeeding families. Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance fully supports the goals of House Bill 513 in classifying breastfeeding as a circumstance that can require exemption from jury service.

Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance was founded in 2007 to help bring together Ohioans of diverse backgrounds to support, protect and promote breastfeeding, and by doing so, improve the health and well-being of Ohioans. OBA is a member of the United States Breastfeeding Committee, which was established in 1998 to coordinate breastfeeding activities in the United States and to fulfill a target principle of the United Nations' 1990 Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding to "establish a multi-sectoral national breastfeeding committee composed of representatives from relevant government departments, non-governmental organizations, and health professional associations in every country." Individuals and organizations across Ohio are members of OBA, including La Leche League of Ohio, whose trained volunteers have provided breastfeeding information and support to Ohioans since 1958.

Ann Davis has been a La Leche League Leader since 1994, and board member of OBA for four years. Jill Davis, RN, IBCLC, has been working with breastfeeding mothers since 2000, has been an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant for 9 years, and is a member of the Ohio Lactation Consultants Association, another organization member of OBA, and represents the central Ohio region for the OBA Leadership Board.

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