

February 26, 2023

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Matthews, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civic Justice Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 34. This legislation is a welcome change as I have personally experienced being summoned to jury duty with a breastfed baby. A little background, I am a stay at home mom of 3, all of whom I exclusively breastfed. When my youngest was 3 months old I was notified of my jury duty summons for 5 dates over the next 2 months. I supplied the excuse form in the proper time, selecting the option for the Ohio Revised Code Sec. 2313.14(A)(5) that my service as a juror would “cause undue or extreme physical or financial hardship to the prospective juror or a person under their care or supervision of the prospective juror”. I explained my situation in the note section provided, stating my baby does not drink from a bottle so I am solely responsible for her nourishment but later received a letter from the court that I was not excused. When I called to discuss options of my service and how to best care for my baby, I was not given any options; I was not allowed to bring my baby to court, my request for excuse was not satisfactory so I would not be excused, and I was told I needed to find an alternative way to feed my baby. There is nothing more provoking than being told by a court clerk how to nurture my baby so I could serve as a juror. I was later advised to submit a personal letter as well as a letter from our pediatrician to the judge, to no avail. Thankfully I was not needed during the time I was required to serve, which was a huge relief.

A few thoughts from my experience. This was a very stressful time as a new mother, trying to determine the best course of action. I felt that it was physically and emotionally harmful to both my daughter and I to leave her with a caregiver who could not properly provide nourishment while I was gone, as my baby did not eat from a bottle. But I did not want to suffer legal consequences for not reporting to jury duty if called. I am still perplexed how a breastfed baby who does not take a bottle does not qualify as “physical hardship” as I was to be away from her for many hours, during which she would need to be fed. According to the Cleveland Clinic, “On average, most exclusively breastfed babies will feed about every 2 to 4 hours. Some babies may feed as often as every hour at times, often called cluster feeding.”¹ Dr. Meek from the American Academy of Pediatrics states, “Breastfeeding can be challenging for new parents, and support from their families, doctors and work places is essential. The health benefits are vast and can be viewed as a long-term investment not only in a child’s development, but to public health as a whole.”² According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), “The short- and long-term medical and neurodevelopmental advantages of breastfeeding make breastfeeding, or the provision of human milk, a public health imperative. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for approximately 6 months after birth. Furthermore, the AAP supports continued breastfeeding, along with appropriate complementary foods introduced at about 6 months, as long as mutually desired by mother and child for 2 years or beyond. These recommendations are

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/how-much-and-how-often.html#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20most%20exclusively%20breastfed,on%20the%20time%20of%20day.>

² <https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2022/american-academy-of-pediatrics-calls-for-more-support-for-breastfeeding-mothers-within-updated-policy-recommendations/#:~:text=The%20AAP%20recommends%3A,along%20with%20nutritious%20complementary%20foods.>

consistent with those of the World Health Organization (WHO).”³ I would be happy to serve as a juror, at the time when my baby is able to be provided nourishment by another caregiver. I support this legislation allowing mothers the opportunity to be excused from jury duty while they nurture their children under 12 months of age.

Thank you for your time and I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

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³ https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057988/188347/Policy-Statement-Breastfeeding-and-the-Use-of?autologincheck=redirected&_ga=2.230337177.400780361.1677444054-1348639704.1673029659