



Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance – *Human Milk for Human Health*

www.ohiobreastfeedingalliance.org

January 22 2024

From: Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance, represented by Ann Davis, board member

To: Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: Proponent Testimony for House Bill 34

“Supporting breastfeeding is one of the most cost-effective interventions that countries, including the United States, can make to improve maternal and child health outcomes,” according to a recent commentary in the American Journal of Public Health (October 2022). Helping parents breastfeed in all sectors of our society should be a priority of lawmakers seeking to improve maternal-child health outcomes in Ohio. Allowing an exemption from jury duty for mothers during the short timeframe of lactation supports breastfeeding in Ohio. The exemption supports Ohio families by reducing childhood and maternal illness, therefore reducing disruptions in childcare, schools and workplaces. A breastfeeding exemption will show families that Ohio leadership values the mother-child relationship, and will work to reduce social burdens by indicating that jury duty may be served at a later time.

To maintain a milk supply when away from their baby, breastfeeding mothers need the flexibility and frequency to pause and express milk around every 2-3 hours, and the facility to do so with privacy and sanitary conditions. Many judges have already made the determination that accommodating the scheduling and facility needs of breastfeeding mothers would have a significant impact on the operation of their courtroom, and allow breastfeeding mothers to be excused from their juries. This practice is however not consistent among all judges and courtrooms. Passing House Bill 34 would bring all Ohio courtrooms into consistent practice regarding jury duty obligations if a woman is breastfeeding.

If a breastfeeding mother summoned for jury duty is not excused, and accommodations are not made in the courtroom schedule and facilities for her to be able to pump in a timely manner and for sufficient duration to maintain her milk supply, the woman risks contracting infection from the inflammation caused by retaining the human milk. One of the established legal circumstances for excusing a potential juror is potential physical harm. The risk of infection due to lack of accommodations aligns with this already established legal circumstance. The alternative would be to overrule the judge’s ability to control their courtroom operation so that accommodations can be guaranteed to any prospective breastfeeding juror, or to allow the jury selection process to enable harm to a potential juror who is breastfeeding a child.

In Ohio, 76% of mothers initiate breastfeeding at the birth of their child. However, by the time that child is 6 months old, less than 24% of those mothers and babies are still breastfeeding. Research shows a strong association of cessation of breastfeeding with a return to work or school, where rigid schedules or lack of facilities can inhibit mothers from being able to maintain their milk supply. Research also shows a correlation of cultural practices and influences that impact a mother’s milk supply also leading to an early cessation of breastfeeding. Social support and approval of breastfeeding practices that help a woman maintain a supply of human milk can make a significant impact on the continuance of

breastfeeding to 6 months of age and beyond. Although jury duty is likely to be only a small factor in those events that impact breastfeeding, this exemption is a way for Ohio to show cultural leadership on the importance of breastfeeding and improving maternal-child health outcomes.

References

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Click on "Ohio"

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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 health professionals, breastfeeding clinicians, local and regional breastfeeding coalitions, and professional organizations. Contact us at info@ohiobreastfeedingalliance.org.

Ann Davis has been a La Leche League Leader since 1994 for La Leche League of Ohio, whose trained volunteers have provided breastfeeding information and support to Ohioans since 1958; board member of OBA for ten years, and resides in Dayton, Ohio. Contact Ann at annbdavis4@gmail.com.