

August 2, 2021

Dear Senators,

We, the 220 undersigned organizations, urge you to **direct \$20M to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding line item** in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies (Labor-H) appropriations bill, \$10.5M above the President's budget and House Labor-H appropriations bill level.

The CDC, our nation's leading health protection agency, has been at the forefront of the pandemic response, providing vital updates and guidance to health professionals and the public. As we continue to grapple with COVID-19 and its variants, recovery efforts must adapt to a population experiencing substantially higher stress levels, inactivity, and an ever-expanding obesity epidemic. Research shows that there have been significant increases in childhood overweight,<sup>i</sup> and the majority of adults report undesired weight changes over the last year.<sup>ii</sup> While the coronavirus death toll continues to rise, chronic disease remains the leading cause of death and disability in the U.S.<sup>iii</sup> Chronic disease management results in trillions of dollars in annual health care costs, and more than 1.7 million people die each year.<sup>iv</sup> The behavioral drivers of chronic disease—poor nutrition, inactive lifestyle, excessive drinking, and tobacco use—increased during the pandemic,<sup>v</sup> suggesting that COVID-19 will exacerbate negative health status trends for years to come.

Ongoing response and recovery efforts will require a comprehensive approach to addressing the dual health crises of COVID-19 and chronic disease. Within CDC, the Division of Nutrition Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) works to prevent chronic disease by promoting good nutrition across the lifespan, regular physical activity, and a healthy weight. **Good nutrition and healthy weight begin with breastfeeding.** DNPAO's effort to support states, territories, tribal nations, hospitals, and communities in advancing breastfeeding continuity of care and in increasing access to breastfeeding-friendly environments are high-value, low-cost public health interventions.

While the President's budget and Labor-H bill call for an overall increase in funding for CDC, it includes level funding for the Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding line item. This increased investment in CDC is essential but will not address the substantial gaps in infant feeding support unless accompanied by a simultaneous increase to the Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding program.

The evidence for the value of human milk to overall health for infants, children, and mothers is scientific, robust, and continually reaffirmed by new research.<sup>vi</sup> The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends infants be exclusively breastfed for about six months with continued breastfeeding while introducing complementary foods for at least one year.<sup>vii</sup> Breastfed infants are at lower risk of certain infections and sudden unexplained infant death.<sup>viii</sup> Children who were breastfed have decreased risk of obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia.<sup>ix</sup> Women who breastfed reduce their risk of specific chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast and ovarian cancers.<sup>x</sup>

Everyone wants to do what is best for their baby, and most pregnant people and new mothers want to breastfeed. As a nation, we met virtually all the Healthy People 2020 goals related to breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity.<sup>xi</sup> We also experienced significant increases in the proportion of employers with worksite lactation support programs and in the proportion of infants born in facilities that have institutionalized maternity care practices that support breastfeeding. We are proud of these wins, yet barriers in healthcare, community, and employment settings continue to impede breastfeeding success.<sup>xii</sup> There are also persistent breastfeeding rate disparities by racial, geographic, and socioeconomic factors.<sup>xiii</sup>

The pandemic exacerbated matters. COVID-19 revealed fissures in our national capacity to coordinate infant and young child feeding in emergencies, destabilized already fragile maternity care practices that

critically underpin breastfeeding initiation, and deepened known disparities.<sup>xiv</sup> The pandemic and the myriad natural disasters that plagued the country in 2020 demonstrated that our states lack the infrastructure to coordinate lactation support services and the provision of breastfeeding equipment during emergencies. High rates of commercial formula supplementation within the first two days of delivery was a pre-pandemic issue that worsened as birthing facilities instituted infection control policies. Limitations on the number and type of birth supporters; mother-infant dyad separations, even in the absence of suspected COVID-19 infection; and rapid discharge procedures, often with poor access to skilled in-person or virtual lactation support, were all harmful to the initiation and establishment of breastfeeding.<sup>xv</sup> Dyad separations unreasonably impacted Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and immigrant communities as evidence suggest an uneven application of the policies based on race and insurance status, with communities of color and those with public insurance being unfairly targeted.<sup>xvi</sup> Shortages in personal protective equipment and social distancing requirements compromised in-person lactation support services in community settings for everyone. However, people in rural communities and those in economically marginalized urban communities with limited broadband access also lacked access to telehealth lactation support services.<sup>xvii</sup>

COVID-related maternity care practice shifts unduly compromised the establishment of breastfeeding in Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities, residents of economically distressed urban areas, and people living in rural districts. These same populations experience many other health inequities, including lesser access to nutritious foods<sup>xviii</sup> and a disproportionate burden of overweight, obesity, and chronic disease.<sup>xix</sup> Given the importance of human milk feeding in establishing good nutrition, healthy weight, and in reducing the risk of chronic disease, we urge the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to **direct \$20M to the CDC Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding line item in FY2022, an increase of \$10.5M from FY2021.**

DNPAO has demonstrated, through funding systems-level interventions in states, and the provision of technical assistance and resources, to have the expertise and the ability to help states and communities implement upstream interventions that support breastfeeding families and positively impact the health of communities. Fully funding the line item will make it possible for DNPAO to:

- (1) Maintain and expand critical monitoring and surveillance activities, including annual analysis of the National Immunization Survey (NIS), administration of the bi-annual Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC) Survey, bi-annual production of the National Breastfeeding Report Card, and administration of the longitudinal Infant Feeding Practices Study, which is especially needed in light of recent updates to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which, for the first time, provides nutritional guidance for breastfeeding people, infants, and toddlers;
- (2) Utilize CDC's website to disseminate breastfeeding data and statistics, guidelines and recommendations, key resources, and information on emergent breastfeeding issues, which was invaluable to the public health community, including breastfeeding coalitions and direct service providers during the height of the pandemic, as they advised families who wanted to discontinue or not start breastfeeding based on unfounded fears of spreading COVID-19 to their infants;
- (3) Expand quality improvement investments to implement maternity care best practices in hospitals while implementing initiatives to recover from pandemic-induced breakdowns in those settings;
- (4) Fund state and community efforts to advance care coordination and strengthen the lactation support landscape through policy, systems, and environmental change interventions to reduce or eliminate breastfeeding disparities; and
- (5) Partner with other federal agencies to develop national and state-level infrastructure to integrate infant feeding and lactation support services into emergency response systems and hunger-relief programs during acute disasters and prolonged public health crises.

We recognize these are extraordinary times, which is why an increase in the CDC Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding line item is imperative. The American people, especially our babies, are the nation's most valuable resource. We must invest in their health, vitality, and resilience through systemic interventions that beat back the rising tide of obesity and associated chronic disease. One of DNPAO's ultimate goals is to improve the public's health by promoting and supporting optimal breastfeeding practices and increasing breastfeeding rates throughout the U.S.

## CO-SIGNERS

### **International, National, & Tribal Organizations:**

1,000 Days  
A Better Balance  
Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine  
Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of Birth Centers  
American Breastfeeding Institute  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians  
American Medical Association  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Attachment Parenting International  
Baby Cafe USA  
Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.  
Birth and Breastfeeding In Color Inc  
Black Mamas Matter Alliance  
Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association  
Breastfeeding Family Friendly Communities  
Breastfeeding USA  
CAI (formerly Cicitelli Associates Inc.)  
Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research, Boston  
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association  
Chocolate Milk Cafe National Inc.  
Commonsense Childbirth Inc./National Perinatal Task Force  
Common Threads  
Feeding America  
Flourishing Families Inc.  
HealthConnect One

Healthy Children Project, Inc.  
Health Education Associates  
Healthy Horizons Breastfeeding Centers, Inc.  
Healthy Nourishment, LLC  
Human Milk Banking Association of North America  
Institute for the Advancement of Breastfeeding and Lactation Education  
International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners  
International Childbirth Education Association  
International Lactation Consultant Association  
Lactation Concierge Services LLC  
Lactation Education Approval and Accreditation Review Committee  
Lactation Education Resources  
Lake Norman Breastfeeding Solutions  
La Leche League Alliance  
La Leche League of the United States of America, Inc.  
Lamaze International  
LiquidGoldConcept, Inc.  
Mamava  
Mayo Clinic  
Medela, LLC  
Mom2Mom Global  
MomsRising  
More Than Reflexes Education  
MotherJourney  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Healthy Start Association  
National Lactation Consultant Alliance  
National WIC Association  
Oya Birth and Wellness  
PATH

Piece of My Heart Productions  
Precious Jewels Moms Ministries  
Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere, Inc  
SimpliFed  
Sonder Health, Inc.  
The Institute for the Advancement of Breastfeeding  
and Lactation Education  
The Mother's Helper  
The Milky Mermaid LLC  
United States Lactation Consultant Association  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
Women-Inspired Systems' Enrichment

**Regional, State, & Local Organizations:**

2 for baby  
African American Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon  
Alabama Breastfeeding Committee  
Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition  
Albany County Public Health  
Alimentacion Segura Infantil  
Aloha Spirits  
Ancient Song Doula Services  
API Breastfeeding Task Force  
Appalachian Breastfeeding Network  
Arizona Breastfeeding Coalition  
Baby And Me LC  
Baby Cafe Bakersfield  
Baobab Birth Collective  
Baylor College of Medicine  
BernaAcago Foundation  
BirthMatters  
Black Breastfeeding Coalition of Topeka  
Bourbon County Health Department WIC program  
Branches Lactation and Infant Feeding  
Breastfeed Durham  
Breastfeeding Boosters of Cottonwood, Jackson, and  
Nobles Counties  
Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware  
Breastfeeding Coalition of Palm Beach County  
Breastfeeding Coalition of Solano County  
Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington  
Breastfeeding Family Friendly Communities  
Breastfeeding Hawaii  
Breastfeeding Latinas  
BreastfeedLA

Breastfeed Orange NC  
Bronx Breastfeeding Coalition  
Brooke Knows Breast, LLC  
California Breastfeeding Coalition  
California WIC Association  
Center for Women - National Council of Jewish  
Women Pittsburgh Section  
Centro Pediatrico de Lactancia y Crianza  
Chicago Region Breastfeeding Taskforce  
CHI Health Centers  
Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates,  
Inc.  
Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition  
Colorado Lactation Consultant Association  
Community Alliance for Research and Engagement  
Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition  
Coordinated Youth and Human Services  
Cuenta Conmigo Lactancia  
Denver WIC  
DePaul Community Health Centers  
District of Columbia Breastfeeding Coalition  
DPHSS NCD Consortium Breastfeeding Action  
Team  
East Central Illinois Breastfeeding Task Force  
East Side Health District  
Edwardsville Region Breastfeeding Task Force  
Every Mother, Inc.  
Fertile Ground Midwifery, LLC  
Florida Breastfeeding Coalition  
Florida Department of Health  
Florida Lactation Consultant Association  
Florida West Coast Breastfeeding Task Force  
Fullbirth, CEA/MNY  
Geelo Wellness  
Harambee Village Doulas  
Healthy Community Action Team  
Healthy Start of North Central Florida Coalition  
Indiana Breastfeeding Coalition  
Inland Empire Breastfeeding Coalition  
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition  
Kelsey-Seybold Clinic  
Lactation Associates of Montana  
Lactation Improvement Coalition of Kentucky  
Lactation Lighthouse  
Lactation Whisperer

Lake Norman Breastfeeding Solutions  
Lioness Lactation LLC  
Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition  
LoLo Lactation LLC  
Love and Nourish Lactation Services  
Lovelace Women's Hospital  
Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition  
Marion County Health Department  
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition  
Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition  
Maternity Care Coalition  
Metro Detroit/ Wayne County Breastfeeding  
Coalition  
Metro Nashville Public Health Department  
Michigan Breastfeeding Network  
Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition  
Missouri Breastfeeding Coalition  
Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast  
Mother's Own Milk Matters  
Nebraska Breastfeeding Coalition  
New Hampshire Breastfeeding Task Force  
New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition  
New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force  
New York City Health + Hospitals/Jacobi  
New York Lactation Consultant Association  
New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition  
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition  
North Dakota Breastfeeding Coalition  
Northern Nevada Breastfeeding Coalition  
Northwell Health  
Nourished Beginnings  
Nourishing New Families  
Nursing Mothers Counsel  
Nurture.  
NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council, Inc.  
Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance  
Oya Birth and Wellness  
Parkland Health & Hospital System  
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition

Perinatal Health Equity Foundation  
Pretty Mama Breastfeeding LLC  
Project Milk Mission  
Purdue University School of Nursing  
Rainbow Nutrition NW  
Raise Colorado Coalition  
Rock Island County Health Department  
Sacramento Breastfeeding Coalition  
Saginaw County Health Department  
Saline County (MO) Breastfeeding Coalition  
San Diego County Breastfeeding Coalition  
Shades of Blue Project  
SimpliFed  
Solutions for Breastfeeding  
Somerville/Cambridge WIC Program  
South Bay Baby Care Nursing Services, Inc.  
Southeast Michigan IBCLC's of Color  
Southern Nevada Breastfeeding Coalition  
South Lake Lactation and Childbirth Services, Inc.  
Southwest Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition  
Speaking of Birth  
St Charles Hospital  
Tampa Bay Breastfeeding Task Force  
Texoma Medical Center  
The Bronx Health Link  
Trust for America's Health  
University Hospitals  
Virginia Breastfeeding Advisory Committee  
Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition  
WellSpan York Hospital  
Wildflower Services & Consulting, LLC  
Wisconsin Association of Lactation Consultants  
Wisconsin Breastfeeding Coalition  
Women, Infants and Children, Central Virginia  
Department of Health  
Women, Infants, Children Program, Minot Air Force  
Base, North Dakota  
Women-Inspired Systems' Enrichment  
Wonderlove Lactation Services

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