

# MAINE STATE BREASTFEEDING COALITION

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## Executive Director

Kara Kaikini

**In Support of LD 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program**

May 25, 2023

## Board of Directors

Petrichor Kneeland-  
Campbell  
*President*

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

Amanda Powell  
*Vice President*

My name is Kara Kaikini and I live in Freeport. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1964 as a Lactation Consultant and as the Executive Director of the Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition (MSBC).

Nina Emlen  
*Secretary*

Feeding breast milk exclusively for the first six months of life (and continued for 2 years) is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.<sup>1</sup> This is based on a significant amount of evidence supporting human milk for this amount of time.

Brooke Barron  
*Treasurer*

Most mothers want to meet these recommendations. Most don't make it. Mothers who have a lack of maternity leave are less likely to even start breastfeeding due to barriers to expressing and collecting their milk in their workplace (Snyder et al, 2018).

Dr. Rachel Criswell  
*At-Large Director*

In 2019 86.6% of Maine's new mothers started breastfeeding. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding at 3 months dropped to 50.5% and by 6 months, it was as low as 28.7%.<sup>2</sup> Far from what the AAP recommends.

Miriam Markowitz  
*At-Large Director*

So what happens in those early months for the majority of new parents? They have a financial need to return to work.

The Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition aims to make it easier for new parents to reach their infant feeding goals. But we know that despite better maternity care, and more support and education, families are still going to struggle to meet their goals (and the recommendations of healthcare organizations) without policy and systems like paid family & medical leave. This kind of policy would remove a significant barrier and would increase rates of human milk feeding.

1. Joan Younger Meek, Lawrence Noble, Section on Breastfeeding; Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk. *Pediatrics* July 2022; 150 (1): e2022057988. 10.1542/peds.2022-057988

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding report cards. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2022. <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>.

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One recent study showed that a 1-month increase in the legislated duration of paid maternity leave was associated with a 7.4 percent increase of early initiation of breastfeeding, a 5.9 percent increase in exclusive breastfeeding, and a 2.2-month increase in breastfeeding duration.<sup>3</sup>

A strong, accessible policy like LD1964 is critical for improving breastfeeding duration and exclusivity and therefore the lifelong public health of Maine's citizens.

As a result of health benefits associated with breastfeeding, a study on the economics of breastfeeding showed that if 90% of infants were breastfed in 2016 then Federal Medicaid costs would have decreased by at least \$111.6 million, resulting in an estimated increase of \$140.9 million in combined Federal WIC and Medicaid costs. On the other hand, health-related cost savings that accrue to WIC households or their health insurance providers would have totaled \$9 billion. This is what can happen if families have systems in place that help make exclusive breastfeeding a reality for them.<sup>4</sup>

Mothers often blame themselves when breastfeeding doesn't work out despite the fact that they are doing everything they can to meet their goals. We need to come together to implement a system of support that will reduce some of these external barriers.

I urge you to support the financial, mental and physical health of new parents and their babies by voting for, *and funding*, the kind of systemic support LD 1964 would bring.

Thank you,  
~Kara Kaikni, MS, IBCLC  
Executive Director, Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition

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3. Chai Y, Nandi A, Heymann J. Association of increased duration of legislated paid maternity leave with childhood diarrhoea prevalence in low-income and middle-income countries: difference-in-differences analysis. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2020 May;74(5):437-444. doi: 10.1136/jech-2019-212127. Epub 2020 Feb 28. PMID: 32111639; PMCID: PMC7307660.

4. Oliveira, Victor, Mark Prell, and Xinzhe Cheng. The Economic Impacts of Breastfeeding: A Focus on USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), ERR-261, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, February 2019.