

LD 865

Anne Marie van Hengel MD
Portland . ME

An Act to require MaineCare to
reimburse for lactation services in the
home for eligible persons

March 17, 2025

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Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyers and Distinguished members of the Health and Human
Services Committee

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today

My name is Dr Anne Marie van Hengel , I am a Fellow of the American College of OB/GYN and
practiced in the Portland area for over 30 yrs, delivering care both at MMC and Mercy Hospital. I
served as Chief of OB/ GYN at Mercy for two separate stretches for a total of about 10 years ,and
was the Medical Director of Northernlight Mercy BirthPlace for over 4 years prior to my retirement
in 2021. Since my retirement I have been actively engaged in activities addressing the challenges
in Perinatal Health care in the State of Maine

I am here to support LD 865 , An Act to require. MaineCare to reimburse for lactation services in
the home for eligible persons.

To put things into perspective:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive Breastfeeding for ALL babies till 6
months, and continued Breastfeeding in conjunction with solid foods for upto 2 years. These
recommendations are supported by American College of Ob/GYN, the American Academy of Family
Practice and the WHO amongst others

ACOG's position statement regarding Breastfeeding reads as follows:

Breastfeeding has maternal, infant, and societal benefits. However, many parents experience
obstacles to achieving their breastfeeding goals, leading to reduced rates of breastfeeding
initiation and continuation. Despite efforts to increase rates of breastfeeding initiation and
continuation, inequities still persist.
ACOG goes on to recommend that practitioners educate parents about the benefits and mechanics
of breastfeeding and encourages clinicians, nursing staff, and government assistance agencies to

advocate for policy changes that facilitate breastfeeding, including lactation programs, both within hospitals and in the community

In the US ~10,000 babies are born every day, and every day ~4,800 mothers stop Breast feeding.

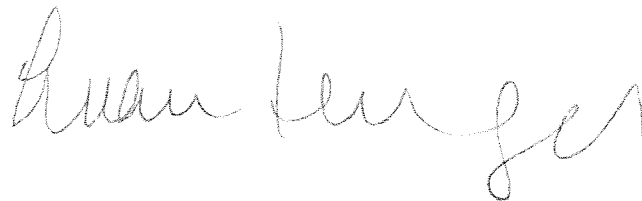
~84% initiate breastfeeding , but only 25 % are still doing so at 6mo. 45 % reported undesired weaning and 2/3rds reported weaning earlier than they had intended. These numbers are substantively worse for low income women

There is no question that extended Breastfeeding is beneficial to both the Birthing parent and their babies. There is clear evidence that this is cost effective and that IBCLCs provide clinical care that leads to more people meeting their Breastfeeding goals .

However, given the challenge of ongoing Birthing Unit closures, a Maternal Health care work force challenge, ,the rural nature of Maine,and the preponderance of Rural deliveries being covered by Maine care, this access is clearly compromised.

In my opinion, this Bill is fundamentally about equitable access to resources that allow ALL those who desire it, quality Lactation support to allow them to meet their breastfeeding goals . Not just those who can pay for it for it out of pocket or through private insurance

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today, I strongly urge you to pass this bill today

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Susan Fenger". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.