

Thank you members of the Committee of Health and Human Services for allowing me to be here today.

My name is Mitchell Kohls, I am a mom of three and an IBCLC in Brewer. I am here today to ask you to support LD 865 including the planned sponsor amendment.

Over ten years ago, I was pregnant with my first child; I knew that I would breastfeed her from the start. I expected it to come as naturally as, well, parenting. It did. In the way that nothing felt natural at all. Eloquently put, my nipples were raw and bleeding; they felt even worse. When I went to the doctors office for her first check up, the doctor was horrified and suggested I get help. Unfortunately, she didn't even know where to send me. I asked in all the mom groups; I tried getting help from the CLC home visitor, but my nipples were already in so much pain I would just cry and nothing seemed to work. Failing to breastfeed seemed imminent.

My little girl was down 12% of her birth weight and not yet gaining. I spent another week doing research online; discovering I needed an IBCLC. The only IBCLC who could see me was with WIC, and then I had to wait to get in for an office visit. They only had enough time for a full appointment in another week. She was already **two** weeks old. By now, my girl started gaining weight, but still wasn't back to birth weight. I was absolutely failing. I barely even started my journey as her mom and my body was failing to do the one thing that it should do the right way, the natural way.

When we finally saw Ramona (WIC IBCLC), she was sent to me from the heavens. Providing what felt like simple positioning tips and reminding me that I'm not failing, just having some bumps in the road. She also reminded me that I sought help from several people, and the system we have in place is far from perfect.

We had more bumps in the years that followed for sure, (tandem nursing, thrush for the three of us, a diagnosed lip tie, mastitis, weaning a toddler, more mastitis, then a NICU baby with oxygen tubes and a lip tie just to name a few), but nothing we couldn't handle with Ramona's clinical lactation care.

Living the Breast Life

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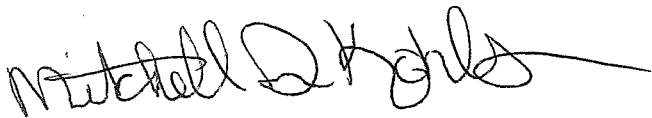
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Now, I am the voice for these families. I am standing here to ensure that others don't spend the first several weeks of parenting feeling that they are failing and don't have anywhere to go. I am here urging you to support Mainecare access for IBCLC clinical lactation care. By allowing us to enroll and accept Mainecare, another family gets to feel empowered again. Doctors don't have to worry about sending their clients to a place that may not help them. They no longer have to feel like an expert in yet another field. By allowing the current 96 Maine IBCLCS access to help Mainecare clients, we can provide the clinical lactation care that these families need, while giving their babies the best start possible. On their level, in their homes, meeting their individual needs.

Again, I am asking you to support LD 865, IBCLC reimbursement for Mainecare, to provide all Mainers additional access to IBCLCs and equitable clinical lactation care.

Thank you for your time,



Mitchell Kohls, IBCLC, CPST, CD-L

Mom of three

Owner of Living The Breast Life, LLC

Advocate of LD 865