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To the Committee,

Thank you for your time. My name is Robin Snyder-Drummond. I am an IBCLC Board Certified Lactation Consultant. I live in Ellsworth and I support LD 85: MaineCare coverage of Donor Human Milk. This is the most important reason why I support this.

All of us are acutely aware of our immune systems in this pandemic year.

Fundamental to our well-being is an impermeable gut membrane. This acts as barrier that prevents antigens (bacteria, toxins, etc.) from entering our system. Hopefully, we have that as an adult.

A newborn baby does not. Preterm or full term, the newborn gut membrane is immature and slightly more porous. This means that antigens can get through the membrane, into the blood stream and cause inflammation and infection, including Necrotizing Enteroocolitis (N.E.C). Every newborn is vulnerable.

However, Nature has planned that the first thing that goes into a baby's gut is human breast milk. The breast milk coats the lining of the gut and provides protection.

1. Human milk is lower in Ph than formula. Being more acidic, it is less conducive to bacterial growth. Formula changes the Ph level and disrupts the normal microbiota of the infant's gut.
2. Human milk is a live food that contains active macrophages. These surround, 'eat up' and expel toxins from the baby's system.
3. Human milk contains growth factors that promote the development of a healthy gut membrane.

By six months, the gut membrane is mature. By six months, a baby is sitting up, eating other foods and putting many things in their mouth. By then, the immune system can better handle that.

Babies can get calories, fats, protein and carbohydrates. Still, they have a profound need for the finely tuned calibration of minerals, essential fatty acids, growth factors and importantly, the anti-infective properties of human milk.

Science has made remarkable advancements in neonatal care. However, there is no substitute for breast milk. It is always important that infants absorb excellent nutrition from the very start. That's why I support Donor Human Milk for every baby that needs it.

- More about the infant gut and breast milk.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-72635-x>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4681407/>

http://flca.info/HTMLobj-150/Just_one.pdf

Breastfeeding and Human Lactation. Fifth Edition. Jones and Bartlett Learning.

Karen Wambach, PhD, RN, IBCLC, FILCA and Jan Riordan, EdD, RN, IBCLC, FAAN.

Chapter Four: The Biological Specificity of Breastmilk.