

MAINE STATE BREASTFEEDING COALITION

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Hello Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Committee. My name is Kara Kaikini and I live in Freeport. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1559 as a Lactation Consultant and as the Board President of the Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition. The breastfeeding coalition supports this bill because paid family leave has been shown to correlate with a significant increase in breastfeeding rates (Huang & Yang, 2013) and significantly decreases the risk of postpartum depression (Chatterji, P. C., & Markowitz, S. M., 2012).

Feeding breast milk exclusively for the first six months of life is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2012). In Maine, there is a 24% decrease in breastfeeding between birth and 8 weeks of life. Over 16% of mothers said they stopped breastfeeding because of returning to work (Maine CDC, 2018). And mothers who have a lack of maternity leave are less likely to even start breastfeeding due to workplace barriers to expressing and collecting their milk (Snyder et al, 2018).

Returning to work after having a baby is a physically and emotionally trying time. Birthing mothers' bodies are recovering from delivery; their sleep patterns are altered; and they feel exhausted, sore, inadequate and stressed. For breastfeeding mothers in particular, they may be having painful challenges themselves, or their babies may be struggling to gain weight or to take a bottle.

Mothers often blame themselves when breastfeeding doesn't work out despite the fact that they are doing everything they can to meet their goals. I urge you to support the financial, mental and physical health of new parents and their babies by voting for the kind of *systemic* support LD 1559 would bring.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

~Kara Kaikini, MS, IBCLC



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