

Karen K. Ehrens, RD, LRD  
Testimony HB 1105  
January 12, 2021

Chair Klemin and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Good day. I am Karen Ehrens, a mother, a Licensed Registered Dietitian, member of the North Dakota Public Health Association, and a person who works to reduce hunger in our state and our communities.

Breastfeeding benefits infants in numerous ways. In addition to providing optimal nutrition, breastfeeding decreases the risk of childhood obesity, guarantees safe, fresh milk, enhances the immune system, protects against infectious and non-infectious diseases, protects against allergies and intolerances, decreases risk of diarrhea and respiratory infections, increases cognitive function, reduces risk for heart disease, and increases bonding with mother.<sup>1</sup>

Breastfeeding benefits mothers' health by decreasing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, decreasing the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, improving blood sugar level in women who develop gestational diabetes, improving bone density and decreasing risk for hip fracture and strengthening the bond with the baby. Breastfeeding eliminates the need for preparing and mixing formula and saves money by not spending it on formula.<sup>1</sup> Breast milk is the first food; it is available in times of emergency.

Breastfeeding benefits businesses and provides a return on investment. Employees who are breastfeeding their child miss work less often, with up to two times fewer maternal absences to care for children. Breastfeeding lowers health care and health insurance costs and reduces sick time taken by both mothers and fathers for their children's illnesses. Breastfeeding helps to retain experienced employees.<sup>2</sup>

**It's time** to update this legislation. The idea for this bill was first launched in 2003. At that time my daughter was 5 years old. Today, she is 23 and is a thriving young woman. My family asks that you support this legislation to send a message to the young families we are trying to keep in the state and the young professionals we are trying to attract to the state. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Breastfeeding is **not** indecent; keeping food from people **IS** indecent.

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Reference:

1. Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: *Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding*, Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2015 (J Acad Nutr Diet. 2015;115:444-449).

2. *The Business Case for Breastfeeding*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau, 2008.

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/files/assets/docs/breastfeeding/business-case/business-case-for-breastfeeding-for-business-managers.pdf>