



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

KRUEGER PRAISES THE STATE ASSEMBLY FOR UNANIMOUSLY PASSING THE BREASTFEEDING BILL OF RIGHTS: Says Bruno Must Allow the Bill to Move in the Senate

LIZ KRUEGER June 12, 2008

State Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) praised the State Assembly for unanimously passing the Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights (A3782-D). Senator Krueger introduced this bill in 2006 and currently sponsors the same as version in the Senate (S1674-D). The legislation codifies mothers' rights into a single, concise document and bans commercial interests from pressuring new mothers into using formula.

"Senator Bruno needs to bring this bill to the floor now," said Senator Krueger. "This bill passed unanimously in the assembly this year with bipartisan support. New York's families cannot afford to have bills like this languish in the Senate for another year."

Senator Krueger spent a year developing this legislation, working with pediatricians, nurses, lactation specialists, as well as discussing the understandability of the Breastfeeding Bill of Rights with new mothers who represented a cross-section of racial, social, and economic demographics, as well as education levels in New York.

Studies have shown that there are fewer medical problems and hospital stays for breastfed infants, which translates into lower healthcare costs and workplace absenteeism. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists supports extended breastfeeding

because it reduces the risk of ovarian and breast cancers in breastfeeding mothers. Other benefits include a lower risk of adult-onset diabetes and osteoporosis.

A 2001 U.S. Department of Agriculture analysis estimated that at least \$3.6 billion could be saved nationally if only 50% of mothers breastfed their infants until they were at least six months old. A family's budget can also be stretched when a mother breastfeeds. Barring limited costs for accessories, breastfeeding is free while mothers can be expected to spend as much as \$700 or more for the first year of formula feeding alone.

"Breastfeeding is completely natural, and is in the best interests of our children.

Unfortunately, the positive medical benefits that breastfeeding provides the mother and her child often go unrealized because our culture discourages women from starting to breastfeed, or continuing beyond a few weeks," said Senator Krueger. "The Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights is common-sense legislation that empowers and supports these new mothers by providing them the information they need prior to, and after the birth of their infant so they can make the best decisions for their child and themselves."

According to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) 2004 National Immunization Survey, 70% of mothers breastfeed after discharge from the hospital, but that number drops precipitously at six months of infant life to 14.4% for White mothers who are still exclusively breastfeeding their infants, 15.7% for Hispanic mothers and 8.6% for African American mothers. In 2001, the CDC found that women who receive the most in-hospital breastfeeding support are eight times as likely to continue breastfeeding for at least six weeks, compared to women who experienced pressure to stop breastfeeding their child. The American Academy of Pediatricians recommends breastfeeding through one year of age.

The Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights requires that new mothers be informed of breastfeeding options before they deliver, while in the maternal healthcare facility, as well as

after leaving that facility. In addition, it bans commercial interests (formula providers) from pressuring new mothers while in maternal facilities without an express request from the new mother. Included within the Bill of Rights:

Before You Deliver:

The right to information free from commercial interests, which provides the nutritional, medical and psychological benefits of breastfeeding; An explanation of some of the problems a mother may encounter, and how to avoid or solve them.

In the Maternal Healthcare Facility:

The mothers' right for her baby to stay with her after delivery to facilitate beginning breastfeeding immediately; to insist the baby not receive bottle feeding; to be informed about and refuse any drugs that may dry up breast milk; 24 hour access to the baby with the right to breastfeed at any time.

When You Leave the Maternal Healthcare Facility:

The right to refuse any gifts or take-home packets, distributed by the maternal healthcare facility, that contain commercial advertising or product samples; access to breastfeeding resources in one's community.

"As basic as some of these rights are, they are consistently violated. There is a very real problem of women feeling pressured out of breastfeeding because the information they received early in their child's life was manipulated by commercial interests more concerned with their bottom line," Senator Krueger concluded. "The Federal government's Healthy People 2010 initiative has set a goal of increasing rates of breastfeeding mothers to 75% upon birth, and 50% until six months of age. It is critically important to support women who choose to breastfeed their newest family member—the Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights

is the ideal first step in making that happen."

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