



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Krueger Introduces Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights

LIZ KRUEGER November 28, 2006

Legislation Codifies Mothers' Rights Into Single, Concise Document; Bans Commercial Interests from Pressuring New Mothers Into Using Formula

New York—Seeking to codify a concise, easily understood document, State Senator Liz Krueger has introduced the Breastfeeding Mothers' Bill of Rights. The legislation, S8511, draws upon New York State Rules and Regulations, the Best Hospital Practices and the World Health Organization Baby Friendly guidelines.

"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 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."

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.

"There are critical medical benefits. There are economic benefits. There are many reasons for women to breastfeed their children. And yet, women who choose to breastfeed do not get enough positive support from hospital staff during their stay, and face too many barriers once they've brought their newborn home," Krueger said.

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.

"New York has been a leader in protecting a woman's right to breastfeed for decades. So, our goal should be to make mothers comfortable—not just protecting the rights of women who choose to breastfeed, but also supporting their decision and making sure they get responsible, medically-factual information," said Krueger.

Senator Krueger spent one 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 demographics in New York.

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. 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," 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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