



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Senator Krueger Attends Breastfeeding Mothers Subway Caravan

LIZ KRUEGER August 6, 2009

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New York- State Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) joined the New York City Breastfeeding Promotion Leadership Committee (NYCBPLC) today for their annual Breastfeeding Subway Caravan. The Subway Caravan began in 2004 as a means to highlight the importance of breastfeeding and reinforce a women's right to breastfeed wherever they have a right to be. This year the Caravan celebrated the passage of Senator Krueger's Breastfeeding Bill of Rights (S1107), which is now awaiting the Governor's signature. The legislation codifies mothers' rights to breastfeed into a single, concise document and bans commercial interests from influencing new mothers' choice of breastfeeding.

The Caravan began at New York Presbyterian Hospital, where a group of breastfeeding mothers and supporters boarded a Brooklyn bound A train. On the train the Caravan members, including breastfeeding mothers, fanned out among the cars to raise awareness on the issue. The Caravan ended at Nostrand Ave., where members joined a rally with other supporters and elected officials at Restoration Plaza.

"This is good for baby and this is good for mom," said Senator Krueger. "Women are often made to feel ashamed when they breastfeed, and oftentimes if they start, quit after a few weeks. Women are buying expensive, less healthy formulas when they can't even afford food for themselves. It makes no sense. It is time that we as a society stop being hung up on

breasts -- after all 51% of us have them evolutionarily engineered for feeding babies -- and start doing what is right for the health and well-being of our newborns and moms."

She added, "This 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."

Senator Krueger spent a year developing the Breastfeeding Bill of Rights, working with doctors, nurses, lactation specialists, WIC specialists, as well as discussing the understandability of the bill 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 Academy of Pediatricians recommends breastfeeding through one year of age as the best practice for healthy infants and children. 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 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:

- o 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:

- o 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:

- o 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. 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 breastfeeding their newest family member," Krueger concluded.