

BREASTFEEDING MONTH PROCLAMATION

August 2023

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania supports the thirty-first year of World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action's theme for Breastfeeding Month "Making a difference for working parents." focusing on engaging governments, health systems, workplaces, and communities to proactively assist and cooperate to empower families by sustaining breastfeeding-friendly environments in post-pandemic work life;

Whereas both the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Global medical authorities recommend exclusive human milk feeding for the first six months after birth with continued human milk feeding for two years or beyond;

Whereas breastfeeding significantly improves lifelong health, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and increases survival of infants and children, as well as improving the physical and emotional health of the mother;

Whereas breastfeeding is affordable and optimal nutrition that is sustainable in times of disaster, is environmentally friendly, and confers an equitable start to life;

Whereas 82 percent of families in Pennsylvania initiate breastfeeding and want their infants to receive human milk, they still face significant barriers to continuing breastfeeding in community, health care, and employment settings;

Whereas Black, Hispanic/Latino, and marginalized families have lower breastfeeding rates resulting in excess harm to the health of infants and mothers and egregious maternal-infant mortality rates within these communities; and face insufficient breastfeeding promotion, unique cultural and workplace barriers, inadequate breastfeeding support, and lack of diversity in the lactation field;

Whereas suboptimal breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity, and duration rates undermine the lifelong health of families and result in excessive healthcare expenditures;

Whereas breastfeeding families with employer support that includes maternity protection, adequate postpartum leave, breastfeeding-friendly workplaces, and whose workplace policies enable them to combine work and sustain breastfeeding, are more productive and loyal and achieve greater intensity and duration of breastfeeding;

Whereas lack of employer support results in families choosing not to breastfeed or breastfeed for shorter time periods;

Whereas regardless of the choice to breastfeed or not to breastfeed, all parents can benefit from access to education on infant nutrition and wellness;

Whereas breastfeeding is a unique human right of all families, they should be supported by society to breastfeed optimally;

Whereas the health, economic, and environmental benefits of human milk feeding produce measurable dividends across the country for families, employers, and the government.

THEREFORE, I, Josh Shapiro, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby recognize August 2023 as BREASTFEEDING MONTH. I support policies and funding to ensure that all lactating parents can access appropriate support from healthcare institutions, insurers, employers, early childcare and education providers, researchers, and government entities. I encourage all citizens across the Commonwealth to recognize the importance of breastfeeding for public health and sustainability.

GIVEN under my hand and the Seal of the Governor, at the City of Harrisburg, this twenty-sixth day of May two thousand twenty-three, the year of the commonwealth the two hundred forty-sixth.

GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO