

Congress Should Pass the Access to Donor Milk Act (S.2819/ H.R.5486)

All major medical authorities recommend breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend breastfeeding initiation within the first hour of birth. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months after birth, with continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods for 2 years or beyond.

Donor milk supports exclusive human milk diets when a mother's own milk is unavailable or insufficient.

Pasteurized donor human milk is human milk that has been donated to a milk bank. It is specifically processed so that it can be given to any baby, although it is generally prioritized for distribution to the most medically vulnerable infants, including those with very low birth weight or with serious gastrointestinal issues. Pasteurized donor human milk can also serve as a bridge to breastfeeding when there is a delay in milk production or a medical need for supplementation.

Life-saving donor milk reduces mortality rates, lowers healthcare costs, and shortens hospital stays.

Infants receiving all human milk diets in the NICU experience fewer hospital readmissions and better overall long-term outcomes. The use of donor milk is associated with increased survival rates and lowered rates of infections, sepsis, serious lung disease, and gastrointestinal complications, and can reduce the length of hospital stays by preventing the development of necrotizing enterocolitis in preterm infants.

Nonprofit donor milk banks need support to ensure families have access to donor human milk.

Although donor milk has important health implications for vulnerable infants in all communities and can result in significant economic benefit, donor milk is not accessible equitably across communities. Throughout the infant formula recalls and resulting shortages, the 30 milk banks located across 26 states in the U.S. saw a significant increase in inquiries to donate and receive milk. More milk banks, depots (drop-off sites), and especially more donors are needed.

The need to invest in an infrastructure that ensures babies are safely fed has never been clearer.

The strategic federal investments in the bipartisan Access to Donor Milk Act (ADMA) would help bring donor human milk to the infants who need it most by:

- Allowing state agencies to use Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) funding to promote the need for and benefits of donor milk and allowing WIC funds to support donor milk activities in states, tribes, and territories.
- Providing emergency capacity-building funding (\$3 million) for milk banks in the event that there is a rapid increase in demand for donor milk, as occurred during the 2022 formula shortage.
- Creating a donor milk awareness program at the Department of Health and Human Services (\$1 million) to educate the public on donor milk, nonprofit milk banks, and to publicize the need for donor milk.
- Requiring that the Secretary of Health and Human Services draft guidance that addresses appropriate standards for collection, processing, handling, transfer, and storage of donor milk and requiring the Secretary to convene a public meeting to inform this guidance.

Human Milk Banking Association of North America • U.S. Breastfeeding Committee