

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (Senator's Last Name Here):

I am writing to you to call your attention to a proven way to reduce Health Care Costs. Cost savings estimates indicate that if 90% of US babies were breastfed exclusively from birth to 6 months of age, **more than 900 lives and \$13 billion in health care costs annually would be saved.**¹ Furthermore, a US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality report² identified that, compared with formula-feeding, **breastfeeding gives significant protection to the mother and baby in many ways.** The breastfed baby has a lower risk of developing ear infections, dermatitis, gastrointestinal infections, lower respiratory infections (such as pneumonia), asthma as a young child, obesity, Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, childhood leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome. A woman who has breastfed has a lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and maternal postpartum depression.

Currently, although more than 70% of women intend to breastfeed exclusively,³ only 35%⁴ are doing so at 3 months. **In order to achieve their own breastfeeding goals, women need support of caregivers with demonstrated knowledge and competence in supporting breastfeeding.** Certified Lactation Counselors (CLC) are trained professionals who can help women achieve their breastfeeding goals. CLCs are able to teach mothers, assess difficult breastfeeding problems and offer comprehensive strategies for success.

One way to contain health care costs is to increase breastfeeding rates and support breastfeeding mothers. I urge you to become informed about all of the cost saving benefits as well as health benefits of breastfeeding and the positive outcomes lactation professionals are enabling in your district. I am one of (enter # here) Certified Lactation Counselors in your state. With your support and promotion we can ensure mothers and babies receive the care and counseling they need and deserve. It is becoming increasingly clear that breastfeeding needs to be viewed less as a lifestyle choice and more as a health care imperative.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the benefits of breastfeeding.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

Your Address Here

¹ Bartick, M., & Reinhold, A. (2010). The burden of suboptimal breastfeeding in the United States: a pediatric cost analysis. *Pediatrics*, 125(5), e1048–1056. doi:10.1542/peds.2009-1616.

² Ip, S., Chung, M., Raman, G., Chew, P., Magula, N., DeVine, D., Trikalinos, T., et al. (2007). Breastfeeding and maternal and infant health outcomes in developed countries. *Evidence Report/Technology Assessment*, (153), 1–186.

³ Declercq, E., Labbok, M. H., Sakala, C., & O'Hara, M. (2009). Hospital practices and women's likelihood of fulfilling their intention to exclusively breastfeed. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(5), 929–935. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2008.135236

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Breastfeeding Report Card 2011, United States: Outcome measures*. Accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard2.htm>.