From: MCHAB
To: Cody Phinney, Administrator,  
Division of Public and Behavioral Health
Date: February 3, 2017
Regarding: Need for Legislative action in support of Nevada’s working, breastfeeding mothers

Whereas breastfeeding has been shown to provide optimal nutritional and health protective benefits for infants, including lower risks of:

- Asthma
- Childhood leukemia
- Childhood obesity
- Ear infections
- Eczema (atopic dermatitis)
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Lower respiratory infections
- Necrotizing (nek-roh-TEYE-zing) enterocolitis (en-TUR-oh-coh-lyt-iss), a disease that affects the gastrointestinal tract in pre-term infants
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Type 2 diabetes

and life-long health protective benefits for women, including lower risk of these health problems in mothers:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain types of breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer

and it is known that these benefits are often “dose-related” to length of time a woman breastfeeds (are enhanced by increased duration of breastfeeding);

And the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for most infants through the first year of life, or longer

The CDC cites a US Department of Labor report that “Employment is now the norm for U.S. women of childbearing age. In 2015, 54% of all mothers with children younger than 12 months were employed, and 73% of those employed worked full-time (35 or more hours per week).¹ National data suggests that approximately 25% of mothers are returning to work by 2 weeks after giving birth.

Employers benefit from offering workplace breastfeeding support in a number of ways. The payoff is significant: more satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings to the business. These savings are seen in such areas as:

- Retention of experienced employees;
- Reduction in sick time taken by both moms and dads for children's illnesses; and
- Lower health care and insurance costs.
Mothers whose infants are breastfed during the first year of life have a lower rate of single day work absences related to their infants than do mothers of formula fed infants.

According to research done by Bar-Yam, essential elements of a successful workplace program are space, time, support, and gatekeepers. Ideally, a Nursing Mother Room (NMR) is centrally located with adequate lighting, ventilation, privacy, seating, a sink, an electrical outlet, and possibly a refrigerator.

The Business Case for Breastfeeding booklet sponsored by the Office of Women’s Health relates that “the California Public Health Foundation WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) agencies provide a breastfeeding support program for their employees, most of whom are paraprofessionals. . . . An evaluation of the California program revealed that more than 99% of employees returning to work after giving birth initiated breastfeeding, and 69% of those employees breastfed at least 12 months. Access to breast pumps and support groups were significantly associated with the high breastfeeding duration rates.”

With Congressional leaders promising repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the probable loss of Federal protections for working mothers it is imperative that Nevada enact legislation to provide these measures for all working mothers in Nevada.

References: