

Washington, DC—On June 10th, thirty-four women took to Capitol Hill to engage legislators in a healthy discussion about the importance of breastfeeding for mothers and babies. The visit to the Hill was the culmination of an Advocacy Day Training event spearheaded by the District of Columbia Breastfeeding Coalition (DCBFC) in collaboration with the District of Columbia and Virginia Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics. They took this discussion to Capitol Hill in advance of the introduction of the Breastfeeding Promotion Act (H.R. 2819, S. 1244) seeking legislative support. The members of this group engaged 6 Senators and 16 members of the House of Representatives about the merits of the bill. Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (NY) and Senator Jeff Merkley (OR) introduced the **Breastfeeding Promotion Act of 2009** in both houses of Congress the following day. Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands already have enacted various laws protecting breastfeeding mothers, but they are not uniform and most are not comprehensive. The **Breastfeeding Promotion Act** will support mothers and babies by helping mothers continue to provide breast milk for their infants once they return to work. “Breast milk is better than any other source of nutrition for the human infant, however, many mothers indicate that returning to the workforce is often a deterrent to their ability to continue breastfeeding” said Sahira Long, M.D, FAAP, President of the DCBFC.

The Breastfeeding Promotion Act (H.R. 2819, S. 1244) includes five provisions:

- Amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect breastfeeding women from being fired or discriminated against in the workplace.
- Provides tax incentives for businesses that establish private lactation areas in the workplace, or provide breastfeeding equipment or consultation services to their employees.
- Provides for a performance standard to ensure breast pumps are safe and effective.
- Allows breastfeeding equipment and consultation services to be tax deductible for families (amends Internal Revenue Code definition of "medical care").
- Protects the privacy of breastfeeding mothers by ensuring they have break time and a private place to pump (applies to employers with 50 or more employees)

This collaboration of physicians and breastfeeding supporters is committed to work tirelessly to see this bill come to fruition. Medical evidence shows that breastfeeding reduces the risk of infections, diarrhea, SIDS, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia in babies. It also reduces the mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancers and diabetes. “Breastfeeding is the single intervention that confers a lifetime of health benefits during infancy and beyond. Optimal healthcare begins with breastfeeding. Discussions of healthcare reform should include improving workplace support for breastfeeding women through the Breastfeeding Promotion Act” says Dr. Long.



The DC Breastfeeding Coalition, established in 2004, is a non-profit organization (www.dcbfc.org) dedicated to enhancing the health of families in the District through improved breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. It is the Coalitions' goal to promote environments that establish human lactation as a societal norm.

