

Bartlett Regional Hospital

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Dear Representatives,

As director of Bartlett Regional Hospital Obstetrics Department (Bartlett Beginnings), I would like to voice my support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 18. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a quality improvement initiative designed to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.

There are many healthcare benefits to babies who are breastfed including reduced ear infections, increased intelligence, reduction in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and childhood obesity. Breastfeeding offers protection to mothers from uterine and breast cancers. Studies show that breastfeeding improves family bonding and nurtures healthy relationships.

Alaskan breastfeeding initiation rates, while above the national average at 85.1%, still have room for improvement. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life is recommended and only 46.6% of Alaskan babies receive this, and only 21% are exclusively breastfed at 6 months. This demonstrates increased need for improved practices, along with increased public awareness and education which HCR #18 helps address.

Birth facility policies and practices significantly impact whether a woman chooses to start breastfeeding and how long she continues to breastfeed. Hospitals that base their care upon BFHI Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding provide an optimal level of care. Recognition and support from the Alaska State Legislature would demonstrate alignment with this initiative. As there is only one currently designated Baby Friendly Hospital in Alaska, this recognition and support may help motivate other hospitals to step up to the challenge to provide this gold standard of mother and baby care.

Bartlett Beginnings has been working to attain BFHI designation. We anticipate achieving our goal this year. Bartlett Regional Hospital's administration is supportive of our efforts. We have seen breastfeeding initiation rates rise, and just as important have improved our care as we implement the evidence-based Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.

Thank you for your work on House Concurrent Resolution No. 18. My staff and I, fully support this resolution.

Sincerely,

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