

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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House Health and Social Services Committee
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HCR 18 Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Sponsor Statement February 27, 2014

The cost of health care continues to climb, and three of the top eight U.S. health issues impact Alaska at over \$1 billion per year. Obesity, diabetes, and cancer are affecting Alaskans physically and fiscally, weighing heavily on Medicaid, other government, state dollars, individual wallets, and family budgets.

A cost-effective, renewable, and abundant natural resource—breast milk—is readily available and could save the state over \$600 million annually. “No public health campaign has a farther-reaching positive effect on wellbeing and longevity,” says Jennifer Aist, BS, IBCLC, RLC, Manager at the Maternity Outpatient Clinics & Services at The Children's Hospital at Providence. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, by promoting breastfeeding, pays out physical and mental health, economic, and societal benefits to babies, mothers, families and communities.

Breastfeeding provides exceptional health benefits to both mother and child and has been scientifically proven to decrease obesity by 50 percent and diabetes by 40 percent over the lifetime of the infant, and decrease breast cancer in the mother by 50 percent. Breastfed babies enjoy higher IQs, lower rates of illness and disease, lower medical care costs, and decreased rates of child abuse and neglect.¹

The resolution states that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes these and numerous additional benefits of breastfeeding and encourages hospitals and birthing centers to attain the baby-friendly designation by implementing the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding program.

Bottom Line

Increased breastfeeding in Alaska will impact more than one bottom line, as it will benefit the physical health, mental health, and societal health of all Alaskans and the financial health of Alaska's state budget.

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. 2013. Does Breastfeeding Protect Against Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect? A 15-Year Cohort Study. Accessed at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/123/2/483.full.html>