



April 2, 2014

Rep. Shelly Hughes
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Rep. Hughes:

On behalf of ASHNHA members, I am writing in support of House Concurrent Resolution 18, the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. This important resolution encourages hospitals and birthing facilities to support breastfeeding and to participate in the Baby-Friendly Hospital initiative.

The benefits of breastfeeding for the health of the baby and the health of the mother are numerous and well-reported. According to a 2013 breastfeeding report card produced by the CDC, Alaska has breastfeeding initiation rates that are above the national average at 84.7%. Yet at six months, only 26.8% of babies in Alaska are exclusively breastfed. We're doing well, but we could be doing better.

Hospitals and birthing centers have a unique and critical role in helping to establish the important relationship between the nursing mother and child. Policies, practices and training that support breastfeeding can have a significant impact on whether a mother initiates and continues breastfeeding.

As hospital providers, we believe that improved breastfeeding rates in Alaska are important to achieving optimal health in our communities. We embrace our role in this effort and we are pleased at the Legislature's recognition and support.

Thank you for your leadership and work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Karen Perdue
President/CEO