



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2020-0720, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Board of Supervisors of Sonoma County  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** Department of Health Services  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Aileen Rodriguez, 565-6598  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Adopt a Gold Resolution acknowledging the importance of breastfeeding awareness and support.

**Executive Summary:**

The Department of Health Services, through their Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health and Women, Infants and Children programs promotes exclusive breastfeeding (along with the appropriate introduction of solid foods) for one year or longer, as desired by the mother and infant. This is an effective prevention strategy to increase protective factors and reduce the risk of overweight and obesity among women and their children. While Sonoma County's breastfeeding rates have continued to climb with strong advocacy and support from the health sector, barriers still exist for the low-income and Spanish speaking populations. Increased access to support for exclusive breastfeeding is necessary to continue to reap the unique health, economic, and societal benefits that breastfeeding provides to babies, mothers, families, and the community.

**Discussion:**

Overwhelming evidence shows breast milk provides optimal nutrition for infants, and breastfeeding offers the best health outcomes for both infants and mothers. Medical professionals, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, recommend that infants receive only breastmilk for the first six months and continue to breastfeed up to at least one year of age with the addition of appropriate foods. As the past Executive Director for UNICEF James Grant said, "Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months goes a long way toward canceling out the health differences between being born into poverty and being born into affluence."

Breast milk offers many benefits for a child's health. It is the perfect first food for babies' growth and brain development; and it protects babies against diarrhea, constipation, allergies, asthma, cancer, diabetes, ear infections, tooth decay, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Among its other well-documented benefits, breastfeeding reduces risk for overweight and obesity. Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate breastfeeding could help to reduce national obesity rates by up to 20 percent.

Breastfeeding is considered a "Life Course Indicator" as it is a behavior tied to a critical or sensitive time period that impacts a mother and baby's lifelong health trajectory. Over the course of a life, the risks of not breastfeeding include increased incidence of several common childhood illnesses and chronic conditions such as obesity, asthma, and certain cancers. Not breastfeeding is also associated with an increased risk of disease for mothers, including breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type II diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The benefits of breastfeeding are dose related so that the longer a woman breastfeeds, the greater protection

she receives. Women whose total lifetime breastfeeding is 6 to 12 months were 10 percent less likely to develop heart disease.

Consistent with other disparities identified in *A Portrait of Sonoma County*, Hispanic women of low socio-economic status experience lower rates of breastfeeding exclusivity. According to 2018 data reported by the California Department of Public Health's Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Program, 75.9 percent of Hispanic women in Sonoma County are exclusively breastfeeding while still in the hospital as compared to 87.9 percent of white women. Women who participated in the Department's WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program in 2018 had an exclusive breastfeeding rate of 48 percent at 4-6 months which far surpasses not only the general population in Sonoma County, but also the Healthy People 2020 goal rates for exclusive breastfeeding.

The Department's Women, Infants and Children program has taken a lead role in Sonoma County in promoting the importance of breastfeeding to community partners, through leading the Sonoma County Breastfeeding Coalition in its collaborative work to ensure all low-income women and babies have the support they need to exclusively breastfeed as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Together we are creating a sustainable system of care that supports breastfeeding in vulnerable families from birth through the postpartum period and beyond.

This gold resolution solidifies our commitment to community support and awareness, and issues a call to action to continue efforts to support breastfeeding in Sonoma County.

**Prior Board Actions:**

On July 23, 2019, the Board adopted a resolution acknowledging the importance of breastfeeding awareness and support.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 20-21 Adopted</b>	<b>FY 21-22 Projected</b>	<b>FY 22-23 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this item.

**Staffing Impacts:**

<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Resolution

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None