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March 14, 2013

Senator Kevin de León  
State Capitol Building, Room 5108  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 402 - Support**

Dear Senator De León,

California Food Policy Advocates is writing to communicate our support for SB 402.

California Food Policy Advocates is a non-profit, public policy, advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of low income Californians by increasing their access to healthy nutritious food. Breastfeeding is simply the best food for infants to ensure they learn healthy eating habits.

SB 402 would require all perinatal hospitals in California to implement all Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding as adopted by Baby Friendly USA per the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, by January 1, 2020. Hospitals would have the option to adopt an equivalent process recognized by the California Department of Public Health.

An overwhelming majority of California mothers, over 90%, make the decision to exclusively breastfeed their babies in the hospital. By the time of discharge a few days later, however only 40% of mothers are exclusively breastfeeding. Breastfeeding success in the hospital is critical during the first 24 to 72 hours of the baby's life; support from hospital staff, standards of care, and hospital policies play important roles in determining if a mother will continue to exclusively breastfeed her baby when the family goes home.

Studies have shown that hospital practices can have a dramatic impact on breastfeeding rates. Exclusive breastfeeding rates increase when hospitals keep mothers and babies together; promote skin to skin contact; encourage feeding shortly after birth; provide staff with education for breastfeeding support; and avoid unnecessary formula supplementation.



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Since many California hospitals which have low or very low exclusive breastfeeding rates are in areas which serve low income women of color, correcting this disparity will improve health equity.

SB 402 will help increase breastfeeding rates, while giving maternity hospitals a reasonable amount of time to become certified as Baby Friendly hospitals or adopt an equivalent process recognized by the California Department of Public Health. Please call if I can provide any additional information. I can be reached at 510.433.1122x103.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George M L".

George Manelo-LeClair  
Executive Director

Cc: Laurie True, California WIC Association  
Karen Peter, BreastFeed LA

