

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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The Nebraska legislature and Governor Dave Heineman recently confirmed what Nebraska women have known for centuries, by signing LB197 into law. This law provides protection for mothers and babies to breastfeed in any place, public or private where mothers otherwise have the right to be.

Many Nebraska moms have already been confidently feeding their babies wherever they find themselves, but many moms have felt restricted to their homes and public restrooms due to perceived societal bias against public breastfeeding. Now our state has *publicly* acknowledged that Nebraska citizens not only have the right to optimally feed their infants, but also are supported and valued by the state in their endeavor to provide the best possible start for their children.

Babies are biologically programmed to feed frequently at the breast to obtain required nourishment, and mothers are biologically programmed to provide that nourishment on cue. Any obstacle to feeding “on demand” is detrimental to baby’s growth and well-being. With today’s active lifestyle, feeding “on demand” often means feeding “on the go.” LB 197 is just one strategy to help reduce obstacles to optimal and sustained breastfeeding.

Nearly 80% of Nebraska mothers are choosing to initiate breastfeeding. However, by three months of age, only 25% of Nebraska babies are being exclusively breastfed and by six months, that number falls drastically to 17%. There are several reasons cited for the drastic reductions in these numbers, but one of the largest is when a mother is returning to work.

Jessica Davies, worksite wellness coordinator at Panhandle Public Health District, embraces the passage of this legislation as well. “This is why helping reduce obstacles by supporting breastfeeding mothers in the workplace is so essential. By offering comfortable accommodations in the workplace for mothers to express milk to take home to their babies, businesses support working mothers, thus improving morale and productivity and reducing absenteeism. Recent federal healthcare reform legislation requires businesses to provide breastfeeding rooms/areas at the worksite.”

Davies reported recently, “Breastfeeding is the most natural and healthy thing a woman can do for her baby. It boosts immunity, reduces risk of allergies and provides optimum nutrition for infants and it’s good for moms too.”

“In a time of economic turmoil, this is one way to ensure the future health of Nebraska and actually save money for our state,” Davies said. “We look forward to collaborating and expanding on existing breastfeeding supports in our state and will seek new and creative ways to continue to improve the climate for breastfeeding in Nebraska.”

For additional information about breastfeeding, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.