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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Snyder Signs Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act**

GRAND RAPIDS – Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed the Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act into law today. This act, supported by the Kent County Health Department and championed by Kent County Commissioners Carol Hennessey, Candace Chivis, and Shana Shroll, will ensure women’s right to breastfeed their babies in public. The Kent County Health Department has numerous programs to educate and support families who breastfeed.

Earlier this year, the Kent County Community Health Advisory Committee (CHAC) voted to support the law. It prohibits businesses from telling mothers who are breastfeeding to stop or leave. Women asked to leave because they are breastfeeding can file a civil action against the business. A letter of support was written by CHAC Chairperson, Commissioner Shana Shroll, and Kent County’s Health Officer, Adam London. Kent County Commissioner Carol Hennessey also testified in support of the bill before committee in the Senate. Laws similar to the Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act (Michigan Senate Bill 674) have been enacted in 45 states.

The Kent County Health Department supports all reasonable efforts to encourage breastfeeding, due its numerous health benefits for mother and child. “Breastfeeding offers benefits to the infant, helping build a strong immune system,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “Our laws should be encouraging mothers to breastfeed. This new law gives women protection from discrimination, and perhaps humiliation, when doing what is best for their babies.”

KCHD encourages breastfeeding to clients of the federally-funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and has several peer counselors available to assist women with questions about breastfeeding. Numerous KCHD employees are also involved in the Breastfeeding Coalition, made up of representatives from area community organizations and hospitals. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows nursing can decrease the risk of obesity, childhood leukemia, other forms of cancer, and the risk of Sudden Unexplained Infant Death as well.

Mothers who nurse lose weight from their pregnancy faster than those who do not. Breastfeeding helps women heal faster after childbirth, can lower stress, and can reduce the risk of breast and uterine cancer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively for baby’s first six months.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

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