

Chris O'Brien

From: Latisha Michel <latishamichel@readysetchgo.com>
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To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Support CLC Bill 8174

Categories: Red category

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Good afternoon,

My name is Latisha Michel. I am a Certified Lactation Counselor, Rhode Island Certified Perinatal Doula and Community Health Worker I have dedicated my life and work to supporting families through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum, especially in communities that have historically been underserved.

I am here today in strong support of Lactation Bill 8174.

I want to be clear, this bill is not just about breastfeeding. It is about prevention, equity, and long-term cost savings for our healthcare system.

Through my work, I see firsthand what happens when families do not have access to skilled lactation support. Many parents want to breastfeed but are met with barriers, lack of education, lack of follow-up care, and lack of culturally responsive support. When those needs go unmet, families often turn to formula, not always by choice, but out of necessity.

What follows is something we are not talking about enough.

I work with families who are constantly switching formulas because their babies are not tolerating them, dealing with vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, and severe discomfort. These issues often lead to repeated pediatric visits, emergency room visits, and in some cases, hospitalizations.

This is not just hard on families, it is expensive.

Insurance providers, including Medicaid and Commercial, are paying for:

- Multiple doctor visits
- Emergency room utilization
- Hospital admissions
- Prescriptions and specialty formulas

All of these costs add up quickly.

Breastfeeding, when properly supported, reduces the risk of many of these issues. It strengthens babies' immune systems, decreases infections, and reduces the likelihood of hospital visits in that critical first year of life.

So when we invest in lactation support, we are not adding a cost, we are preventing one.

We are saving money on the back end by putting resources on the front end.

But beyond cost, this is also about equity.

The families I serve, primarily Black and brown families do not always receive the same level of breastfeeding support as others. Without intentional investment, that gap will continue, and so will the disparities in health outcomes.

This bill is an opportunity to change that.

It ensures that families receive the support they need early, consistently, and from providers who understand their lived experiences.

Passing Lactation Bill 8174 means:

- Healthier babies
- More confident parents
- Fewer hospital visits
- Lower healthcare costs
- And a step toward true health equity in Rhode Island

I urge you to support this bill and invest in the health of our families and our future.

Best,

Latisha Michel (she/her)

Founder of Ready Set Latch Go, LLC

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"Birth isn't something we suffer, but something we actively do and exult in"