A LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SB 2070:

Breast milk provides the ideal nutrition to promote infant development and the health benefits of the practice are unparalleled. Infants that are breastfed have a significantly lower risk of developing respiratory issues, certain forms of cancer, diabetes, SIDS, and of becoming obese, as well as many other health conditions. Breastfeeding also provides significant benefits to mothers, including reducing their risk of developing breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer, and diabetes. The United States Surgeon General estimates that the average family can save between $1,200.00-$1,500.00 during a baby's first year of life through breastfeeding. The United States as a whole would save $13 billion per year and prevent an excess of 900 deaths if 90% of US families could meet recommendations to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months.

Despite these benefits, Mississippi has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the country (currently 47th). Promoting breastfeeding is an extremely low-cost (often no-cost) public health strategy that directly addresses many of our state’s chronic and costly health concerns, such as obesity, diabetes and infant mortality, and would save our state millions in unnecessary healthcare costs.

Supporting breastfeeding employees is also a value for businesses. This can be documented through the retention of experienced employees, reduction in sick time taken by both moms and dads for children's illnesses, and lower health care and insurance costs. It is important to note that 54% of the civilian labor force in Mississippi is female and Mississippi has one of the highest rates of women returning to work after childbirth, with 71% of mothers with young children in Mississippi in the labor force.

In order for a mother to continue working and adequately provide breastmilk to her infant she must have the time and space to pump and store breastmilk in a private and sanitary location. Pumping can often take less than fifteen minutes and most moms require only two or three sessions in an eight hour work-day. Many employers are already required to provide this time and space through federal law, but all Mississippi mothers and infants deserve these protections and this support (which is provided by SB 2070). Nearly 20 other states have passed similar laws, including nearby Arkansas and Tennessee, and seen increases in breastfeeding rates without any significant impact on businesses.

Together, we stand in support of SB 2070 and acknowledge the importance of increasing breastfeeding rates in Mississippi as an essential public health strategy for our state!