

Steven Sepe

From: Nichole Murawski <nichole.murawski@gza.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 12:41 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: I support House Bill H7882

Dear Mr. Sepe,

My Name is Nichole Murawski and I am a parent that uses a CLC and I am writing in support of House Bill 7882, which updates the "Lactation Consultant Practice Act of 2014" to recognize the CLC and ALC certifications as professional lactation support roles eligible for licensure. The current language of the law recognizes lactation support in a clinical setting, but without naming CLC and ALC certifications as included credentials, we miss a significant portion of Rhode Island's growing community of lactation support professionals.

The Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) and Advanced Lactation Counselor (ALC) certifications qualify lactation support professionals to operate independently to address the majority of lactation support needs. These credentials represent a pathway to lactation support for perinatal support professionals who are not healthcare providers and/or without nursing backgrounds. The CLC & ALC track is a common track for doulas, WIC peer counselors, community health workers, and others who wish to provide professional lactation support but who do not have a medical or clinical background. In contrast to the IBCLC certification pathway which requires a nursing or medical background, the majority of CLCs and ALCs practice outside of clinical settings, such as in perinatal health, education, and resource centers, and in client homes. CLCs and ALCs are trained to refer clients to medical providers when appropriate.

Recognizing CLC and ALC as a pathway to professional lactation support will broaden and diversify the pool of available lactation support professionals, and the settings in which families can access this essential support. This has the potential to help address some of our state's disparities of access to quality lactation support.

Lack of adequate support is one of the leading causes for bodyfeeding families to stop before the recommended duration. According to the CDC: "Among infants born in 2019, most (83.2%) (in RI: 82.4%) started out receiving some breast milk, and 78.6% were receiving any breast milk at 1 month. At 6 months, 55.8% (in RI: 54.6%) of infants received any breast milk and 24.9% (in RI: 22.9%) received breast milk exclusively. Families can face many challenges when it comes to breastfeeding. Yet data show that most infants start out breastfeeding, and many are still receiving some breast milk at 6 months. Even some breast milk is beneficial to infants. However, many families do not breastfeed for as long as they intend to and breastfeeding disparities by race and ethnicity persist. The steady decline in any and exclusive breastfeeding from month-to-month indicates that breastfeeding families may need stronger systems of support to reach their breastfeeding goals.

I urge you to approve Bill 7882 with recommendation of passage.

For me, personally, access to different types of lactation support was instrumental in successfully feeding my first born. He was a very difficult baby. He cried any time his eyes were open for around six months, would not sleep unless held, got so worked up in the car seat that he would often throw up and start choking on his vomit. Taking him to see the IBCLCs to get the help we needed for breastfeeding to go well was near impossible. We considered formula, but with all of the other struggles we were reluctant to add finding the right formula into the mix. Additionally, as we all learned in 2020, relying on a material good being in stock to be able to feed your child can be unreliable and can have grave impacts if certain goods become unavailable for any number of reasons. As a solution we ended up using CLCs who would come to our home to help us work out our breastfeeding struggles, at great out of pocket expense. My husband and I were lucky to have savings that we could use to cover this expense. Many families are not so fortunate. Approval

of Bill 7882 would likely make access to this essential support more readily available to a larger portion of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Nichole

Nichole Murawski, E.I.T.

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