

Submitter: Laura Labarre
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB692

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

My name is Laura Labarre and I'm a parent of two young children as well as an early childhood advocate. I do not think it's overstatement to say that quality lactation consulting may have saved mine and my baby's life. With my first pregnancy, I worked for an employer that refused me any paid maternity leave. This forced me to rush back to work all too soon after birth when breastfeeding was still new and precarious. My baby was struggling, losing weight and sleeping a maximum of 90 min stretches while I too struggled, bleeding and stretching myself to return to work full time. When I say "struggled" I mean that I experienced relief to learn that the blood my baby kept vomiting up was mine and not his. I tried many "lactation consultants," racking up bills I couldn't afford, they all told me I was holding him wrong or I just needed to spend more unstructured time with him (which of course I could not do because of work). Finally after 5 months of declining physical health for both of us and rapidly diminishing mental health for me, I was connected to an IBCLC in my local community with a similar background to me who could meet me in my home. She quickly identified my child's tongue tie that required a procedure to correct. His nursing improved, finally allowing him to gain weight and stopping my recurring painful, expensive, and disruptive mastitis infections that caused me to miss more work I couldn't afford to miss. Financial constraints meant I had to stop seeing this IBCLC right as my baby and I were finally hitting our nursing stride. The nursing relationship declined again and I had to exclusively pump for 6 more months, which became a time consuming burden that also detracted from my mental health though thankfully my child thrived. The IBCLC's work came at a critical time for my mental and physical health, and if I had been able to continue it, my life as a mother would have been immensely improved. No one should need to choose between a service like this and paying their bills.

Please pass SB 692.