



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony

County Council Bill 11-22: Buildings – Lactation Rooms in County Buildings – Required

July 12, 2022

The Community Action Board, which advocates on behalf of the County’s low-income community, supports County Council Bill 11-22. The Community Action Board advocates for policies that provide added support to workers and remove barriers that people face when trying to remain in employment that provides a self-sufficiency wage. Requiring County buildings to provide lactation rooms does just this – it provides critical support to County employees and removes an employment barrier by allowing new parents to breastfeed/pump for as long as they wish, even after they return to work.

As the governing body for Head Start, our board has a strong interest in the health and well-being of young children. Research reveals numerous health benefits for newborns that are associated with breastfeeding, including a lower risk of SIDS, asthma, and type 1 diabetes.¹ In order to maximize these benefits, new parents should have the opportunity to breastfeed for as long as they would like and lack of a sufficient space to pump at work should not stand in the way.

It is important to note that lower-income women are less likely to breastfeed than higher-income women.² There are many reasons for this, including the fact that lower-income women often work low-wage jobs in areas such as food service or retail where there is less flexibility with their schedules. For some hourly employees, stepping away from work to pump may mean

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/features/breastfeeding-benefits/index.html#:~:text=Breastfeeding%20can%20help%20protect%20babies,ear%20infections%20and%20stomach%20bugs.>

² [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6071891/#:~:text=Breastfeeding%20is%20an%20issue%20of%20health%20equity.&text=Socioeconomically%20marginalized%20\(SEM\)%20populations%20with,levels%20of%20income%20and%20education.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6071891/#:~:text=Breastfeeding%20is%20an%20issue%20of%20health%20equity.&text=Socioeconomically%20marginalized%20(SEM)%20populations%20with,levels%20of%20income%20and%20education.)

lower wages. Our board therefore recommends expanding the requirements of this bill to employees outside of County Government. Women in all sectors would benefit from a private space for pumping. We ask that you keep this in mind as additional policies are being developed, especially in an area like Montgomery County where the Self-Sufficiency Standard for a family of three with one adult, one infant, and one preschooler is an astounding \$103,322.³

We ask the Council to pass this bill and to continue to explore other opportunities to expand work supports and benefits for all Montgomery County residents.

³ <https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/>