

## Adams, Maloney, Congressional Maternity Care Caucus, & Black Maternal Health Caucus Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Ensure Breastfeeding Rights for Working Moms



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**WASHINGTON, DC** – Today, co-chairs of the Black Maternal Health Caucus **Alma Adams (D-NC)** and **Lauren Underwood (D-IL)**, Congresswoman **Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY)**, and Congressional Maternity Care Caucus co-chairs Congresswomen **Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA)** and **Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)** introduced the bipartisan [\*Providing Urgent Maternal Protections \(PUMP\) for Nursing Mothers Act\*](#). This bill will close an unintentional coverage gap in the Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act and ensure that all employees who are nursing babies less than a year old have the access and protections they need to express milk during the workday.

“As a mother and grandmother, I know how important it is to break down the barriers that hold women back from the best possible health outcomes,” **said Congresswoman Adams**. “Every major medical authority strongly encourages breastfeeding for at least the first year of life, as it provides significant health and

nutritional benefits to both the mother and infant. By closing an unintended loophole, the ***PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act*** provides protection and support to an additional 9 million working moms who have been forced to choose between breastfeeding and earning a paycheck. Especially during a pandemic and a maternal health crisis, nursing parents should not be punished for making the best choices for their children.”

“When I was pregnant with my first child, I was told there was no such thing as maternity leave at my current job, and while we’ve come a long way since then, new parents still face too many difficulties in the workplace. Those difficulties should not include breastfeeding,” **said Congresswoman Maloney**. “All working moms who want to breastfeed must have access to basic accommodations to pump breastmilk in clean, private spaces. These employees and their families suffer when these basic rights aren’t met. Without these protections, nursing mothers face serious health consequences, including risk of painful illness and infection, diminished milk supply, or an inability to continue breastfeeding. I’m thrilled to be joined by Reps. Herrera Beutler, Roybal-Allard, Adams, and Underwood as we fight to make sure all working moms have the ability and workplace protections to breastfeed their infants if they want to. No new mother should be forced to choose between breastfeeding and earning a paycheck.”

“As a mom of three young kids, I understand what it’s like to balance a professional career with raising children. For working mothers who choose to breastfeed, having a safe, private place to pump while at work is a huge help. I’m proud to partner with my colleagues on this bipartisan legislation so Southwest Washington moms aren’t forced to choose between earning a paycheck or nursing their babies – a solution that will help businesses attract and retain employees, and families make healthy choices,” **said Congresswoman Herrera Beutler**.

“I commend my colleague, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, for her decades of leadership in protecting and promoting breastfeeding rights for working moms across this country,” **said Congresswoman Roybal-Allard**. “Research has shown that if 90% of families breastfed exclusively for six months, nearly 1,000 infant deaths could be prevented each year. As Maternity Care Caucus Co-Chair I am proud to support the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act to ensure that teachers, nurses, farmworkers and salaried employees have the same breastfeeding protections guaranteed to other workers by the 2010 Break Time Law, so that they can successfully continue to breastfeed their children after returning to work.”

“New moms returning to the workforce after childbirth should not face barriers to trying to pump at work. Yet each year, millions of

working moms are denied this basic protection,” **said Congresswoman Underwood.** “I am proud to lead the *PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act* and thankful for the leadership of Chairwoman Maloney in helping ensure returning to work is not a barrier to mothers making the best choice for themselves and their families.”

“Through enactment of the Break Time for Nursing Mothers Law, we have ten years of data clearly indicating that through early coordination and communication, the needs of lactating employees and their employers are easily anticipated and accommodated. Unfortunately, the Break Time Law leaves nearly 9 million workers unprotected. The PUMP for Nursing Mother’s Act intends to close that gap, and we are thankful that Congressional champions from both sides of the aisle came together to move this critical legislation, demonstrating that breastfeeding is a bridge-building bipartisan issue,” **said Nikia Sankofa, Executive Director, U.S. Breastfeeding Committee.**

“Employers in every industry should have policies in place to accommodate the needs of pregnant and breastfeeding employees. Unfortunately, that is not currently the case for far too many sectors. Instead, too many workers are penalized, discriminated against, or left without options when they seek reasonable accommodations. The PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act would ensure that millions of employees left unprotected by current law will have a reasonable amount of time and a private place to pump breast milk at their place of work. This critical legislation is long overdue and is essential to safeguard the health and economic security of millions of women and families across the country,” **said Vania Leveille, Senior Legislative Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union.**

“As we hear all too often, new mothers returning to the workplace face unfair treatment because their employers refuse to provide them with time and space to express breast milk, forcing them to choose between breastfeeding and their paycheck,” **said Dina Bakst, Co-Founder and Co-President of A Better Balance.** “Some workers reduce their schedules, are terminated, or are forced out of the workplace, foregoing vital income and economic security. Too many who continue in their jobs struggle with harassment and health repercussions. Others simply stop breastfeeding altogether. These challenges face many new working parents, but disproportionately low-wage working mothers of color. The PUMP Act will change that and finally guarantee fair treatment for nursing mothers.”

“Breastfeeding discrimination is widespread and mothers who breastfeed their babies are losing their jobs,” **said Jessica Lee,**

**Senior Staff Attorney at the Center for WorkLife Law, UC Hastings Law.** “As detailed in our report, Exposed: Discrimination Against Breastfeeding Workers, in nearly 2/3 of breastfeeding legal cases from the last decade the employee lost their job. Many more lost wages, faced health consequences or stopped breastfeeding early because of a lack of simple and affordable accommodations at work. Lactation discrimination has particularly harsh effects for women of color, adding to our nation’s health and economic disparities. The PUMP Act will protect lactating employees and their families by strengthening existing law and closing the loophole that leaves nearly one in four working women of childbearing age uncovered by federal protections.”

### **Background**

The ***PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act*** would strengthen the 2010 Break Time law by:

- Closing the coverage gap. The bill would protect 9 million employees unintentionally excluded from the 2010 Break Time law by extending the law’s protections to cover salaried employees as well as other categories of employees currently exempted from protections, such as teachers, nurses, and farmworkers.
- Providing employers clarity on paid and unpaid pumping time. The bill leaves in place existing law protecting many salaried workers from having their pay docked, and clarifies that employers must pay an hourly employee for any time spent pumping if the employee is also working.
- Providing remedies for nursing mothers. The bill would ensure that nursing mothers have access to remedies that are available for other violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.**, is serving her fourth full term in Congress. She represents the 12<sup>th</sup> District of North Carolina, which includes parts of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. In 2018, she introduced the first Black Maternal Health Week resolution with then-Senator **Kamala Harris**. In 2019, she co-founded the Black Maternal Health Caucus with **Rep. Lauren Underwood (IL-14)**. In March 2020, Adams, along with Harris and Underwood, introduced the ***Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act*** for the first time, and in February 2021 reintroduced an expanded version of the package with **Senator Cory Booker**. Adams is a mother of two and a grandmother of four.

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