

October 17, 2013

For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Christine Gibson [cgibson@breastfeedLA.org](mailto:cgibson@breastfeedLA.org)

Karen Peters [kpeters@breastfeedLA.org](mailto:kpeters@breastfeedLA.org)

## **Governor Signs Bill that will Give Birth to More Baby-Friendly Hospitals**

SACRAMENTO - California Governor Jerry Brown has signed the historic and ground-breaking legislation [Senate Bill 402](#), authored by [State Senator Kevin De Leon](#), and in doing so has moved our state closer to current policy and practice recommendations for maternity care.

SB 402 requires all general acute care hospitals and special hospitals that have a perinatal unit to adopt the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" per the [Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative](#), or an alternate process that includes evidenced-based policies and practices and targeted outcomes, by 2025.

SB 402 will require birthing hospitals to incorporate recommended practices like allowing early and often skin-to-skin time for moms and babies, rooming in, and giving moms the skills and support they need to reach their breastfeeding goals.

"Breastfeeding is low-cost and prevents acute and chronic diseases in moms and babies, promotes bonding, supports socio-cognitive development, and helps get every baby off to a good start," said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director and Health Officer of the [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#). "Family members, communities, employers, peer counselors and health care providers must all be a part of a mother's support system as she provides her infant with the optimal first food."

Former US Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, specifically urges hospitals to support moms by following evidenced based practices listed in the [2011 Call To Action To Support Breastfeeding](#). In her report, she points out that, "in the United States, the majority of pregnant women plan to breastfeed, and yet there is a clear gap between the proportion of women who prenatally intend to breastfeed and those who actually do so by the time they are discharged after a brief hospital stay."

Research recently published by the LA County Department of Public Health also points out this gap and asks the question, [Hospital Practices: Do They Impact Breastfeeding?](#) The LA Health brief states that, "While 72.5% of children ages 0-2 years were exclusively breastfed on the day of birth, this rate dropped drastically to only 45.4% by the third day ... and only 9.9% at six months" The current recommendation from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and professional healthcare organizations worldwide is exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of a baby's life, with continued breastfeeding for the first year or more of life.

The brief goes on to examine mother's exposure to certain breastfeeding-related (Baby-Friendly) hospital practices and their impact on the breastfeeding experience. Data reveal that when mothers experience four hospital practices, they exclusively breastfeed at one month at more than three times the rate (78.8%) of mothers who experienced some or none of the following practices (22.2%).

Hospital practices that impact breastfeeding:

- breastfeeding within the first hour
- rooming-in
- avoiding supplementation
- and giving mom a phone number to call for help

Karen Peters, Executive Director of [BreastfeedLA](#), states that the Los Angeles County Health Survey results make it clear that hospital practices do matter and that hospitals have a unique opportunity to shape a mother's success in breastfeeding. We urge hospitals to use this influence to support healthy beginnings for all moms and babies." Peters continues, "Many hospitals in Los Angeles County that have low or very low exclusive in-hospital breastfeeding rates are in areas that serve low income women of color. SB 402 addresses the health equity issue of access to quality care and levels the playing field for generations to come."

BreastfeedLA has been working intensely with hospitals in LA County for over 3 years by co-convening the [Regional Hospital Breastfeeding Consortium](#) with the LA County Department of Public Health and PHFE WIC, with support from [First 5 LA](#). The Consortium is a forum where hospitals can support each other as they navigate and manage significant practice changes. "We are asking hospitals to have a policy, which is a critical first step, but we're hoping they also provide care under a completely different paradigm," says Wendy McGrail, Senior Nutritionist with [PHFE WIC](#), "where keeping moms and babies together is seen as tremendously important and happens routinely; where struggling moms receive skilled breastfeeding help; and hospitals monitor and know their breastfeeding rates. This is new for many hospitals."

Although the implementation deadline for SB 402 isn't until 2025, changes are already set to take place next year with the [Hospital Infant Feeding Act](#) and new reporting requirements with [The Joint Commission](#) on breastfeeding, both to take effect January 1, 2014.

California has taken a bold step forward with SB 402, ensuring access to quality maternity care for all, including California's newest citizens. BreastfeedLA and families across the state wish to thank [Governor Brown](#), Senators [De Leon](#) and [Pavley](#) and their staff, the [California WIC Association](#) and ALL who helped pass SB 402!

###

**BreastfeedLA** is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of infants and families through advocacy, education and outreach to promote and support breastfeeding.

Sign-up for our weekly newsletter to receive information on breastfeeding education and events throughout Greater Los Angeles and breastfeeding research and resources from across the globe.

[LEARN MORE](#)