



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

September 8, 2022

Dear Senator Merkley and Representative Maloney:

We are in a notable moment in history, when support for mothers, children and families must be a priority, and responding to the needs of women to support their children is critical. Pope Francis has expressed that he values a feminism which, “does not demand uniformity or negate motherhood,” and has also said, “...the grandeur of women includes all the rights derived from their inalienable human dignity but also from their feminine genius, which is essential to society.”<sup>i</sup> If our society genuinely values women and the gift of motherhood, it is essential that policies support and accommodate the unique and awe-inspiring nature of maternity.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, for over a century, has worked for the removal of barriers that compound discrimination against women, preventing full and equal opportunities. It is the reason we have advocated in favor of many improved labor laws, and currently [support](#) the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA). The PWFA requires employers to provide reasonable pregnancy-related accommodations in the workplace. Similarly, we now urge you to pass the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act (S. 1658/H.R. 3110), requiring employers to extend simple accommodations, such as a reasonable break time and a place other than a bathroom, for mothers to express breastmilk at their places of employment.

The benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child are well-known, especially the vital way by which it provides for a child’s basic right to nutrition. As we have [stated](#) before, “Every person has a right to life and to the material and spiritual support required to live a truly human existence. The right to a truly human life logically leads to the right to enough food to sustain a life with dignity.” And yet, 60% of mothers do not breastfeed as long as they intend.<sup>ii</sup> This is due to various factors, one of which is unsupportive workplace policies.<sup>iii</sup> Congress can significantly improve workplace policies for millions of women by passing the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act. Congress approved similar bill language in 2010 under the Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act. However, due to gaps in the law, millions of mothers were left unprotected. We encourage Congress to correct the inadvertent exclusion of these women.

In addressing the topic of breastfeeding, Saint John Paul II said, “So human and natural is this bond that the Psalms use the image of the infant at its mother’s breast as a picture of God’s care for man.”<sup>iv</sup> Especially in [light](#) of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, we must find more ways to support mothers and children. Please pass the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act during this session of Congress to protect and honor the right of a mother to nurse her child.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paul S. Coakley in black ink.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice  
and Human Development

Handwritten signature of William E. Lori in blue ink.

Most Reverend William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

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<sup>i</sup> Pope Francis. *Amoris Laetitia* (Mar. 19, 2016). [papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf \(vatican.va\)](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding. [Facts | Breastfeeding | CDC](#)

<sup>iii</sup> University of California, Hastings College of the Law. Exposed: Discrimination Against Breastfeeding Workers (Jan. 2019). [Exposed: Discrimination Against Breastfeeding Workers \(uchastings.edu\)](#)

<sup>iv</sup> Saint John Paul II. Address of His Holiness John Paul II to Participants in the “Breast-feeding: Science and Society,” Study Sessions organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (May 12, 1995). [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/may/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19950512\\_academia-scienze.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19950512_academia-scienze.html)