

[Date]

The Honorable Buffy Wicks, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2160 Medi-Cal: lactation services

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of [Organization Name], I am pleased to write in strong support of AB 2160 (Rodriguez) to streamline and clarify access to lactation support professionals for Medi-Cal members.

Add a few sentences about yourself/your organization and why your organization takes an interest in equitable access to lactation support.

Breastfeeding/chestfeeding is a critical public health strategy¹ that improves maternal² and infant³ health outcomes, reduces costs⁴, and advances health equity. Yet despite existing coverage under California's Medi-Cal program, many families encounter unnecessary administrative barriers when seeking lactation services. Confusion about plan responsibilities, provider expertise, and provider availability can delay or prevent access to timely support—particularly for low-income families who already face disproportionate health challenges.

This bill takes important, practical steps to address these barriers. By directing the department to streamline procedures and issue updated guidance to include IBCLCs (International Board Certified Lactation Consultants) as providers by January 1, 2029, the measure will:

¹ V. Machado et al., "Breastfeeding as a Strategic Driver for One Health: A Narrative Review," *Nutrients* 17, no. 23 (2025): 3766, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12694379/>

² Eleanor B. Schwarz and Melissa Nothnagle, "The Maternal Health Benefits of Breastfeeding," *American Family Physician* 91, no. 9 (May 1, 2015): 602–604, <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2015/0501/p602.html>

³ Carrie D. Patnode, Nora B. Henrikson, Elizabeth M. Webber, Paula R. Blasi, Caitlyn A. Senger, and Janelle M. Guirguis-Blake, "Breastfeeding and Health Outcomes for Infants and Children: A Systematic Review," *Pediatrics* 156, no. 1 (2025): e2025071516, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2025-071516>

⁴ Briana J. Jegier, Julie P. Smith, and Melissa C. Bartick, "The Economic Cost Consequences of Suboptimal Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices: A Scoping Review," *Health Policy and Planning* 39, no. 9 (August 1, 2024): 916–945, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11474603/>

- Clarify standard billing and reimbursement procedures for lactation services, including appropriate billing codes.
- Clearly define managed care plans' responsibility to cover and reimburse lactation services and supports.
- Ensure that Medi-Cal members who reasonably self-identify a need for lactation consultation can access services without prior authorization, a prescription, or referral.
- Expand clarity around qualified providers, including IBCLCs, who may deliver and be reimbursed for these services.

Equally important, the bill requires stakeholder input prior to issuing guidance, ensuring that providers, advocates, and families have an opportunity to inform implementation. Allowing the department to operationalize these changes through plan letters, provider bulletins, and similar instructions will support timely action while regulations are developed.

By improving clarity and accountability within Medi-Cal, this bill will help ensure that families receive the lactation support they need during a critical window for maternal and infant health⁵. Improved access to lactation services is associated with lower rates of infant illness, reduced maternal health complications, and better long-term outcomes—particularly for communities that experience inequities in care.

For these reasons, [Organization Name] respectfully urges your support of this important measure. Please feel free to contact [Name, Title, Email, Phone] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization Name]

⁵ Shoba Suri, Giovanna Verlato, and Subhasree Ray, "Editorial: The First 1000 Days: Window of Opportunity for Child Health and Development," *Frontiers in Nutrition* 12 (August 18, 2025): 1673003, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2025.1673003>