



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Breastfeeding Caravan Kicks Off At City Hall

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New York -- Today on the steps of City Hall, breastfeeding mothers and families, elected officials and advocates from all over New York City participated in the NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council's annual Breastfeeding Subway Caravan. After the rally, the caravan traveled on the "A" train to Bedford-Stuyvesant's Restoration Plaza for the Annual World Breastfeeding Week Fair sponsored by the Brooklyn Alliance for Breastfeeding Empowerment (B.A.B.E.).

New York State Civil Rights Law § 79-e, one of the first laws of its kind in the nation, protects women's right to breastfeed anywhere they have the legal right to be. Unfortunately, there are still some who are unaware of this protection or who choose not to abide by it. The Breastfeeding Leadership Council seeks to draw attention to the fact that too many women are still being questioned, stigmatized, and harassed for breastfeeding in public.

Among the elected and public officials speaking were:

Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

State Senator Liz Krueger

Councilmember Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Health Commissioner Mary Bassett, MD

Deputy Health Commissioner, Center for Health Equity, Aletha Maybank, MD

At the rally, Council Member Cornegy was presented with the NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council's Breastfeeding Champion Award for his leadership in promoting breastfeeding as an option for working mothers and co-sponsoring the Lactation Room Bill (Intro 1063) which will require lactation rooms in certain public spaces.

Council Member Cornegy leads by example. His wife breastfed each of their six children, with his encouragement and support, and he was the first City Council Member to establish a Lactation Room in his office in Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn.

"As today's caravan celebrates our wives and mothers right to breastfeed in public, there is more that we can do as a city," said Council Member Cornegy. "My most recent legislation that is soon to be signed into law by Mayor de Blasio requires public offices, such as job centers, SNAP centers and medical assistance centers to provide a lactation station upon request. It is our obligation to foster an environment that protects the significance of breastfeeding. As we celebrate the victory for mothers that endure long wait times in public offices, we must continue to secure a stronger foundation for all breastfeeding families."

The goal of the Breastfeeding Subway Caravan is to celebrate breastfeeding women and families and to raise public awareness of New York State laws that protect nursing mothers and babies. It is held on the first Friday in August to commemorate World Breastfeeding Week (WBW). Each year hundreds of thousands of people from over 170 countries join in celebrating the miracle of mother's milk. This year's WBW theme is Breastfeeding: A Key to Sustainable Development. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that babies be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life. Breastfeeding along with appropriate solid foods should continue up to two years of age or beyond.

"Breastfeeding is not a lifestyle choice; it is a public health imperative. According to recent research, it is estimated that if 90% of women breastfed exclusively for 6 months, the U.S. would prevent over 900 infant deaths and save \$13 billion each year in the United States! We have laws protecting a women's right to breastfeed in public, but we need to change the societal culture to accept and embrace these rights. We need to work together to make breastfeeding the norm," said Theresa Landau, Chairperson, NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council, Inc.

"Encouraging breastfeeding is one of the simplest things we can do to make big improvements in public health. Every year we're learning more about just how important it is," said Sen. Liz Krueger, who has championed pro-breastfeeding legislation and breastfeeding families in New York State. "Every mother has the right to breastfeed anywhere she's legally allowed to be – whether that's a government office, a subway car, a library, or anywhere else. Moms should be able to make their own decision about breastfeeding, and we're here today to raise awareness and help make that decision an easy one."

"I am delighted to join the breastfeeding caravan once again to celebrate New York laws permitting women to breastfeed wherever they are," said Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, who has been a national breastfeeding leader for working women for a generation. "Breast milk is the healthiest food for infants, offering protection against asthma, allergies, ear infections, respiratory illness and stomach problems. It also helps new mothers recover from child birth. I am proud of passing federal legislation to support breastfeeding and to encourage companies to build lactation rooms for their employees. The women who are gathered here today are sending a clear message to my colleagues in Congress and legislators across the country that breastfeeding is an important right that must be protected and strengthened."

"Breastfeeding is natural, it's healthy, and it improves outcomes for both mother and child," said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. "Every new mother must have the right to breastfeed if she wants to, free from discrimination or stigma. Congratulations to the advocates of the NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council, who have done so much to spread the word, reduce the stigma, and improve our laws to protect breastfeeding moms."

"New York City has laws in place to protect the right of women to breastfeed in public – anytime, anywhere," said NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett. "But many women still feel uncomfortable breastfeeding their babies in public spaces because they do not feel supported to do so. It's time to change those social norms to reflect the needs and the rights of mothers in our city."

"Our moms do not always feel they have the freedom to determine how to use their own bodies in their own neighborhoods," said Deputy Commissioner Dr. Aletha Maybank. "It is through collective efforts, like the Breastfeeding Caravan, that we may begin to see changes in the freedom and comfort for moms and families to

breastfeed.”

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