



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Senator Krueger Joins NYC First Lady Chirlane McCray And Advocates To Launch Breastfeeding Caravan

LIZ KRUEGER August 4, 2017

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New York -- Today on the steps of City Hall, State Senator Liz Krueger and First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray joined breastfeeding mothers and families, elected officials, and advocates from all over New York City to launch the NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council's annual Breastfeeding Subway Caravan. After a 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:

-First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray

Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer

Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney

State Senator Kemp Hannon

Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages

State Senator Liz Krueger

City Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Deputy Commissioner of Health George L. Askew, MD, FAAP

"Motherhood is a wonderful experience, which at times can also be stressful. No woman should have to worry about breastfeeding her baby – there is nothing more natural! I am proud of the progress that we have made to improve the lives of mothers across NYC – from introducing lactation pods in every borough and lactation rooms in City offices, to expanding paid sick leave and ramping up efforts to address maternal depression," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**, who leads the City's mental health and substance misuse efforts.

"For those moms who are able to and choose to breastfeed, it's important that they get the support they need and know their rights," said **State Senator Liz Krueger**. "In New York State, every mother has the right to breastfeed anywhere she's legally allowed to be, without any

stigma or barriers getting in the way. The health benefits of breastfeeding, for both moms and babies, are clear, and encouraging breastfeeding is one of the simplest things we can do to make big improvements in public health and the lives of New York families."

At the rally, State Senator Hannon and Assemblywoman Solages were presented with the NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council's Breastfeeding Champion Award by Dr. Susan Vierczhalek, Vice Chairperson of the New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition. The legislators received the award for their work to ensure that this year's state budget included Medicaid coverage for donor breast milk. Pasteurized donor human milk, or PDHM, is given to premature babies and those born with very low birth weights when a mother's milk is not available. PDHM helps prevent many health complications, some potentially fatal, and provides significantly more benefits than formula. However, because it was not reimbursed by Medicaid, PDHM had been unavailable for many low-income families in the NICU. Medicaid is now able to cover PDHM for the medically fragile hospitalized infant. This is life-saving for many infants. For others it will save millions of dollars in health care costs and improve the health of the baby.

"Promoting the health benefits of breastfeeding is vitally important, so I am pleased to participate in celebrating World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month," said **State Senator Kemp Hannon**, Chair of the State Senate Health Committee. "I am proud to have sponsored many important laws to encourage and support breastfeeding in New York, including a 2017 law which ensures the most fragile infants in NICUs have access to life saving donated breast milk under Medicaid. Events like this help educate the public on the benefits of breastfeeding, and I commend the organizers for their hard work."

"In light of the many benefits of breastfeeding, it is essential that communities support and improve access to good nutrition for our little New Yorkers. As a new mother myself, I

experienced the many challenges that women face in regards to ensuring the well-being of our infants. That is why I made a commitment to advocate for legislation that builds a strong foundation for our children, their families and our State,” said **Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages**. “I am honored and humbled to receive the New York City Breastfeeding Leadership Council Breastfeeding Champion Award. I would also like to applaud the accomplishments of New York City Breastfeeding Council and all the advocates who are dedicated in promoting Breastfeeding throughout New York State. Together we will protect, promotion and support breastfeeding.”

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 Sustainable Partnership and the Rule of Law. 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 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. It’s my pleasure to rally today with 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.”

“Breastfeeding plays an important role in the health and development of children,” said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. “It is the right choice for millions of women and children, and it is a human right that should be protected for both women and infants. Too many

breastfeeding mothers face discrimination or penalties in the workplace. World Breastfeeding Week, and the New York Breastfeeding Caravan, help send 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.”

“Every major health organization in the world recognizes the importance of breastfeeding," said **Theresa Landau**, Chairperson, NYC Breastfeeding Leadership Council, Inc. "Breastfeeding is not only a lifestyle choice, but is a public health imperative. It is up to us as a society to support mothers and families in their breastfeeding journey. Breastfeeding gives every baby a healthy start in life – regardless of their income status, ethnicity, race or religion. We are working together to create a culture that is comfortable with breastfeeding. NYC is providing many opportunities for moms to reach their breastfeeding goals ... from prenatal care to maternity hospital practices ... to community support. The Breastfeeding Subway Caravan was created to raise awareness of a woman’s right to breastfeed, anywhere, any time.”

"Moms in New York City have the right to breastfeed wherever and whenever they want," said **Dr. George L. Askew**, Deputy Commissioner of Health, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "Breast milk is the perfect food to meet all of a baby's needs for growth and development. The Health Department has made it a priority to promote lactation and support babies, their mothers, and families citywide, because all of our littlest New Yorkers deserve the best start in life."

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