



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Public Health

January 23, 2013

The Honorable John A. Alario, Jr., President
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

The Honorable Charles E. Kleckley, Speaker
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 94062, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9062

Re: House Concurrent Resolution No. 52 of the 2012 Regular Session

Dear President Alario and Speaker Kleckley:

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is submitting this correspondence in response to House Concurrent Resolution 52 of the 2012 Regular Session regarding the feasibility of establishing a breast milk bank at a hospital in Northeast Louisiana with a level three neonatal intensive care unit.

On average 65,000 infants are born in Louisiana annually. Of those born, far too many are quite ill as a result of being born prematurely and unfortunately some babies will not survive. Louisiana is changing the way business is done to improve birth outcomes through targeted health care and nutrition interventions. These changes are necessary to address perinatal indicators that contribute to stagnant health rankings which show little change over time and keep Louisiana hovering at the bottom of all national score sheets.

Poor pregnancy outcomes are associated with many complex factors that present public health challenges to Louisiana. These factors are medical, social, environmental and psychological. They also contribute to worse outcomes for low birthweight, preterm babies, and increase infant mortality due to late or no prenatal care, substance abuse, pregnancy spacing, chronic disease conditions, sexually transmitted diseases, socioeconomic status, and nutrition.

In spite of these grim facts, we believe that progress is being made through the work of many DHH programs that have combined efforts to improve health outcomes for moms and babies:

1. Launching the DHH Birth Outcomes Initiative - a targeted cross-departmental and cross-sector effort to improve the health outcomes of Louisiana's moms and babies. The 39 Week Initiative is a collaboration between public and private partners to facilitate hospitals voluntarily establishing policies to end the practice of elective, non-medically necessary deliveries prior to 39 weeks gestation. All birthing hospitals have signed on to the 39-Week Initiative. This initiative is showing promise through reduced NICU admissions and reduced elective deliveries.
2. Launching the Louisiana Health Assessment Referral and Treatment web-based prenatal behavioral health screening tool. LaHART streamlines the screening and referral process for pregnant Medicaid eligible women in need of treatment for substance use during pregnancy. State providers are reimbursed roughly \$50 for conducting prenatal behavioral health screening and brief intervention. LaHART screens for tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse as well as domestic violence.
3. Establishing the NICHQ/CDC Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative – DHH is supporting four Louisiana hospitals selected in September 2012 to participate in a national collaborative to improve hospital breastfeeding practices. As participants in the collaborative, Terrebonne General Medical Center, East Jefferson General Hospital, Tulane-Lakeside Hospital, and Opelousas General Medical Center are slated to become the state's first Baby Friendly hospitals in March 2014 . This will place them among the nation's leading hospitals in infant feeding practices.
4. Authorizing the use of the drug 17-Hydroxyprogesterone to decrease the incidence of repeat pre-term births.
5. Promoting key statewide activities and initiatives to improve rates of breastfeeding:
 - a. Guided Infant Feeding Techniques www.thegiftla.org, a breastfeeding certification program and approach which enables moms to begin breastfeeding at the hospital – increasing the likelihood that they will continue at home. Efforts are ongoing by the DHH Maternal and Child Health program to promote this effort and currently 24 hospitals have achieved Gift Certification.
 - b. Women, Infant and Children's peer-to-peer support for mothers to help them learn breastfeeding strategies that work for them. The DHH WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program provides breastfeeding education and support to its participants and the community. WIC clinics provide breast pumps and other breastfeeding tools at no cost to moms who:
 - i. Have premature or hospitalized infants,
 - ii. Need to increase their breast milk supply,
 - iii. Have other medical or breastfeeding problems, or
 - iv. Returning to school or work and want to continue breastfeeding.
 - c. DHH targeted billboard campaign featuring an actual family (not models) who provide the support for mom and baby to successfully breastfeed. The campaign began in August with a series of billboard public service messages placed throughout the state.

- d. DHH Workplace Lactation Program in which lactation rooms are provided in the Bienville Building at Baton Rouge, Benson Towers at New Orleans and where many Office of Public Health programs are located. The rooms provide a private, secure space for breastfeeding mothers, who are returning to work and need to pump; supporting them in continuing to breastfeed.

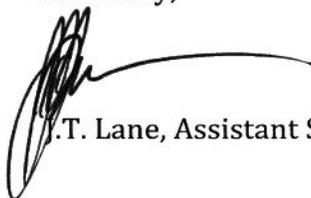
The Department supports all measures to assure the survival and healthy development of infants and the health of their moms. DHH has the expertise to provide staff input and education to share with private organizations that are interested in learning more about breastfeeding. However, contemplating the establishment of a breast milk bank is a serious business decision that requires an organization to evaluate its own internal business operations in several areas such as finances, research and development, marketing, organizational structure, and past objectives and strategies. The Human Milk Banking Association of North America <https://www.hmbana.org/> is a national, non-profit association of donor human milk banks established in 1985. The HMBANA sets standards for breast milk banks, facilitates establishment and operation of breast milk banks in North America, and provides recommendations to organizations on establishment of a breast milk bank.

Hospitals are one of our biggest and most supportive partners in many health care efforts within the department. We welcome the opportunity to provide education and training about breastfeeding and regulatory issues to any private organization that is interested in establishing a breast milk bank, but we believe that any hospital interested in doing a feasibility analysis should utilize the expertise of HMBANA.

I am always available to speak with you more about promoting breastfeeding efforts and welcome the opportunity to discuss ways we can collaborate on this going forward.

If you need additional information, please contact me directly at jtlane@la.gov or at (225) 342-8093.

Sincerely,



J.T. Lane, Assistant Secretary

cc: Representative Katrina R. Jackson
Representative Regina A. Barrow
Representative Barbara N. Norton
David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library