



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals
Center for Community and Preventive Health

December 18, 2013

The Honorable Sharon Weston Broome
President Pro Tempore, Louisiana Senate
P.O. Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Senator Broome,

The Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) has reviewed SCR 42 and we appreciate your commitment to this issue. The Office of Public Health (OPH) Nutrition Services Program manages the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The purpose is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk. WIC provides nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. We are committed to facilitating public-private collaboration with families and communities in order to increase maternal and infant nutrition awareness, particularly in underserved areas. DHH also recognizes the importance of providing access to nutritional programs for mothers and their children (beginning in utero) throughout their first year of life. To this end, we are deeply invested in SCR 42 which acknowledges the role of optimal infant nutrition during the first year of life as well as the benefits of providing new mothers with assistance required to provide the best nutritional start for their babies.

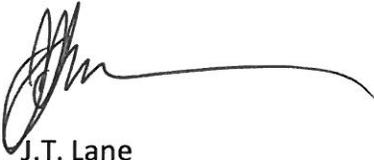
WIC also promotes and supports breastfeeding, as the optimal source of nutrition for infants (as scientific research acknowledges health benefits to both the mother and child), and provides a host of services for WIC participants who choose to breastfeed their infants. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continuance throughout the first year of life. Thus, these services include enhanced nutritional food packages for breastfeeding women, access to breast pumps, and assignment of a one-on-one breastfeeding peer counselor for support. However, the program recognizes and respects that not all mothers choose, or are able to breastfeed their infant, based on family life circumstance as well as barriers to breastfeeding. Thus, WIC also provides nutrition assessment and requisite food packages (including the issuance of special infant formula if necessary) for all infants in the program.

The WIC Program works collaboratively with a host of DHH and other community-based programs including the Bureau of Family Health, Partners for Healthy Babies, SNAP-Ed, and community providers. This collaboration helps promote awareness of WIC services for expectant and new

mothers which enhances maternal / infant access to this valuable nutritional program. Furthermore, public & private collaboration is both, strongly encouraged and crucial. It is through this type of collaboration that we will increase awareness and access to these life-saving and life-altering services.

Thank you for your leadership and passion on this critical issue for our state's families. I am happy to meet with you any time to discuss new ways we can improve the health of Louisiana's most important resource: her people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.T. Lane', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J.T. Lane
Assistant Secretary