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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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National Breastfeeding Month Highlights Need for *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* *Bi-Partisan Bill Proposed to Support Nursing Mothers' Return to Work*

MADISON – During August, which marks National Breastfeeding Month, Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison) and a bipartisan group of legislators introduced the *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* to remove barriers to nursing mothers returning to work. The *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* would ensure that new moms who take unpaid break time to breastfeed or express breast milk do not lose their eligibility for employer-sponsored health insurance. The bill would also update Wisconsin law to align with federal standards regarding breastfeeding accommodations.

“No new mom should have to choose between making the healthy choice of breastfeeding her baby and returning to work to provide for her family,” said Rep. Subeck. “The *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* would update state law to reflect federal changes that occurred over a decade ago and will remove obstacles breastfeeding mothers too often face in the workplace.”

In 2010, the federal government updated the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), requiring employers to provide accommodations in the workplace for nursing mothers to breastfeed or express milk, including providing unpaid break time for expressing breast milk. The *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* codifies these changes at the state level, adds critical protections to eliminate barriers, and ensures nursing mothers do not have to choose between breastfeeding and health care by counting unpaid breaks for the purpose of expressing breast milk toward the minimum required hours for health insurance eligibility.

The *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* was first introduced in 2015 in response to a constituent who lost her health insurance due to unpaid breaks taken to pump breastmilk. Her employer had allowed her breaks for this purpose, but because these breaks were unpaid, her work hours dropped slightly under the minimum threshold for health insurance eligibility, and her family lost their health care.

“Our bill eliminates barriers to returning to work for nursing mothers and maintains access to health care for working families with new babies,” said Rep. Subeck. “At a time when Wisconsin is facing a worker shortage, the *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* would make it easier for new mothers to return to the workforce without having to sacrifice breastfeeding to do so.”

The U.S. Breast Feeding Committee declared August as National Breast Feeding Month on August 6, 2011, to highlight breastfeeding benefits and applaud the mothers who make the selfless choice to breastfeed. The World Health Organization notes that over 820,000 infant lives are saved each year due to breastfeeding.

“Breastfeeding provides health benefits for both babies and mothers,” said Rep. Subeck. “The *Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act* would ensure no new mom has to sacrifice the benefits of breastfeeding to provide for her family.

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78TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT