Low Quality Breast Pumps Put California Children’s Health at Risk

**Medi-Cal Rate Increase for Breast Pumps and Supplies Needed**

**Access Barriers**
Women on Medi-Cal do not have access to high quality breast pumps because reimbursement rates are too low.

- Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for breastfeeding support have not increased since 1998.
- Low quality breast pumps may yield little or no milk, preventing mothers from establishing or maintaining breastfeeding, impacting their baby’s feeding – and ultimately overall health.
- Low income women are already less likely to breastfeed and more likely to stop breastfeeding early.
- Lack of quality breast pumps through Medi-Cal has forced new mothers to search for alternative providers, such as WIC, to cover gaps in breast pump supplies. This is the responsibility of Medi-Cal.

**Health Barriers**
All mothers should have access to high quality breast pumps to support breastfeeding and help prevent childhood illness and obesity.

- Science proves that when infants are breastfed, their risk for obesity is reduced, especially if they are exclusively breastfed for more than three months.
- Research has shown breastfeeding is responsible for a reduction in many childhood illnesses including ear, digestive and lower respiratory infections and other serious health issues.
- In California, obesity rates among low-income children between 2-5 years old are higher than the national average and nearly 1 in 5 is overweight.
- Studies suggest breastfeeding leads to reduced risk of breast & ovarian cancer in mothers.

**THE SOLUTION**
A modest $7 million annual increase in the Medi-Cal breastfeeding support budget will help ensure all mothers have the opportunity to successfully breastfeed their babies using effective breast pumps, saving Medi-Cal costs in the long run.

- Medi-Cal could realize savings from $405,000 to $940,000 per 100,000 women by providing improved breastfeeding services and support, including high quality breast pumps.
- Access to high quality breast pumps can help lead to optimal breastfeeding rates, which could reduce medical costs related to infant illnesses by $1.6 million per 100,000 women.
- Increased Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for breast pumps will help avoid strains on other providers like WIC, who have become the de facto quality breast pump provider for Medi-Cal recipients.

Low-income women should not be subject to barriers that prevent them from breastfeeding their babies and giving them the best chance for a healthy life.

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