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**CONTACT:** Lynn Sutfin  
517-241-2112  
[SutfinL1@michigan.gov](mailto:SutfinL1@michigan.gov)

## **Governor Whitmer declares August 2022 as National Breastfeeding Month, highlights additional breastfeeding observances**

*Indigenous Milk Medicine Week Aug. 8-14; Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week Aug. 15-21; Black Breastfeeding Week Aug. 25-31*

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan is committed to encouraging a strong foundation for life in all infants by supporting breastfeeding parents for the first year of their child's life and beyond. As part of this effort, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has issued a proclamation declaring [August 2022 as National Breastfeeding Month](#).

“During National Breastfeeding Month we recommit ourselves to supporting infants and new parents and ensure that every Michigander has equitable access to the resources and support they need to give their child a great start,” said Governor Whitmer. “We will work with Michigan’s health care providers and local organizations to broaden public understanding about the impact breastfeeding has on improving infant health and reducing infant mortality rates within communities of color across the state. I will work with anyone to ensure every baby in Michigan has what they need to grow up and pursue their potential.”

Breastfeeding is a public health imperative central to successful health equity strategies that confront racism, classism and sexism which are the root causes of inequities – and combatting these are a key strategy in reducing maternal and infant mortality. Disparities in breastfeeding rates and other maternal and infant health outcomes are most evident among Black and Indigenous families in Michigan. Increased efforts highlighting increased support to breastfeeding are part of Governor Whitmer’s [Healthy Moms Healthy Babies](#) initiative.

“Proper nutrition for infants is critical for their growth and development, and it is important for hospitals, business, communities and coalitions to work together to provide consistent support for breastfeeding parents in Michigan,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MDHHS chief medical executive.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has updated its recommendation to breastfeed up to 2 years of age because of the benefits to the infant and the parent. Breastfeeding provides countless benefits to the nursing infant including easy digestion, production of antibodies and reduced risk of infections and childhood obesity. It also offers faster recovery from birth and reduced risk for postpartum hemorrhage and uterine cancer for the breastfeeding parent.

Ways to support breastfeeding include advocating for paid maternity leave and adequate pumping time while at work and school, and by bolstering [Baby Friendly hospitals](#). National Breastfeeding Month is also a time to highlight under-resourced

communities where families do not have equal access to support, care and education. The national formula shortage amplified how food disparities impact our most vulnerable populations, black and brown families. It has shown us the areas where improvement is needed to protect babies and ensure that parents are provided adequate prenatal breastfeeding education to make an informed decision.

Although 86.9% of Michigan families initiate breastfeeding, only 58% are still breastfeeding at three months ([PRAMS 2020](#)), and there are barriers such as lack of access to supportive health care and childcare providers and lack of paid work leave that leads to early weaning. Additionally, there are fewer lactation professionals from communities of color.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black infants are 20% less likely to have ever received breast milk than any other race. In Michigan, seven of every 1,000 babies born die by age one, and among Black babies, the number is more than double. Between 80 and 90 maternal deaths occur each year with Black women dying 2.4% more often.

The state's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is celebrating National Breastfeeding Month with the theme "In Every Drop." Michigan is committed to encouraging to improving outcomes for breastfeeding parents and helping community health workers such as community-based doulas and the WIC Peer Counseling support program to help diversify lactation support and increase breastfeeding rates in local communities across the state.

WIC supports breastfeeding in the following ways:

- Free, unlimited access to lactation consultants and breastfeeding peer counselors.
- Training to all WIC staff to support prenatal and breastfeeding families.
- Breastfeeding clients get more WIC foods than non-breastfeeding clients, including canned fish, and are able to stay on the program longer.
- At six months, breastfed babies receive infant meats and more fruits and vegetables.
- Many WIC clinics offer telehealth appointments.
- WIC offers a breastfeeding warmline available seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 833-MIWICBF (833-649-4223).

For more information, visit [Michigan WIC](#)