



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING
transforming health policy and practice through nursing knowledge



ANA
AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

American Academy of Nursing and American Nurses Association Statement on U.S. Opposition to World Health Assembly Resolution on Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding Saves the Lives of Children and Mothers

Washington, DC (July 12, 2018) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) and the American Nurses Association (ANA) decry the attempt by the United States Delegation to the World Health Assembly (WHA) to use strong-arm tactics to undermine global efforts supporting and promoting breastfeeding.

Human milk is inarguably a life-saving medical intervention. As reported in a 2016 study published by The Lancet, breastfeeding could save the lives of 823,000 children and 20,000 mothers each year. Human milk and breastfeeding are critical for infant and child health, as well as for the health of mothers. Professional organizations worldwide recommend exclusive human milk/breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life and continued breastfeeding for the first year and beyond.

Globally, too few women are able to meet the recommended exclusive human milk feedings for the first six months which in turn means many women are not able to breastfeed for one year or two years as recommended by the World Health Organization. Families worldwide deserve the right to evidence-based lactation care and education.

“The Academy has long-endorsed human milk and breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding, and our own Expert Panel on Breastfeeding is in agreement with the evidence-based consensus among public health professionals that breastmilk is the healthiest option for babies,” said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FAAN. “While access to formula for women who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to breastfeed is important, we find it irresponsible for any government to oppose a resolution which promotes affordable, basic nutrition that is the best for infants and young children.”

“The health benefits of breast milk for children are unparalleled. Additionally, women who breastfeed experience a lower risk of breast cancer, depression and other diseases,” said ANA President Pamela F. Cipriano, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN. “For decades, international and national health care organizations have worked to educate women about the benefits of and reduce the barriers to breastfeeding. It is unconscionable that any government would act in opposition to these goals.”

Despite the undisputed benefits of breastfeeding, the United States delegation to the WHA opposed two provisions of the breastfeeding resolution. The first opposed provision urged member states to protect, support, and promote breastfeeding; the second opposed provision urged member states to continue to implement the recommendations of WHO’s International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes to end inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children.

Ultimately, the U.S. delegation signed on to the resolution, but not before successfully eliminating the provision to end inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and children. Contrary to U.S. claims that the issue surrounding the elimination of the ‘inappropriate promotion of foods’ provision was to ensure women who are unable to breastfeed are equally supported with information and access to alternatives for themselves and their babies, the resolution in no way restricted access to formula and, in fact, already included a separate provision promoting the timely and adequate complementary feeding of the non-breastfed child between 6 and 24 months of age. As evidenced by the language of the eliminated provision, its aim was to end “inappropriate” promotion of foods for infants and children, not the availability of alternatives for women who are unable to breastfeed.

The American Academy of Nursing and the American Nurses Association urge the Administration to fully support, protect, and promote breastfeeding, nationally and internationally, so that all infants, children, and mothers may receive the undisputed life-saving benefits that breastfeeding provides

#

About the American Academy of Nursing

The American Academy of Nursing (www.AANnet.org) serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy's more than 2,500 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, and research. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

About American Nurses Association (ANA)

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 4 million registered nurses. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. ANA is at the forefront of improving the quality of health care for all. For more information, visit www.nursingworld.org.

Contact @ American Academy of Nursing:

Barry Eisenberg

Barry_Eisenberg@aannet.org

202-777-1174

Contact @ American Nurses Association

Shannon McClendon

shannon.mcclendon@ana.org

301-628-5391