

Date

Judges Name

Address of the court

Name/Child Name

Court Case Number

Dear Honorable Judge [Insert Name Here]:

I am writing to you as a mother on behalf of my child who is currently breastfeeding. The intention of this letter is to ask you to protect and preserve the breastfeeding relationship when determining allocation of parenting time in accordance with *MCLS § 722.27a, Child Custody Act of 1970*. I have briefly outlined some information that may be helpful to you in this case.

Breastfeeding is not a lifestyle choice: it is a public health issue for mothers and children. Numerous health organizations including The World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office, and The American Academy of Family Physicians recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life and that breastfeeding continue throughout the first year of life based on the considerable benefits breastfeeding imparts to the child. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that "breastfeeding should be continued for *at least* the first year of life and beyond for as long as mutually desired by mother and child" ("Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk," *Pediatrics*, March 2012). Currently, the WHO recommends that children be breastfed for a *minimum* of two years.

The benefits of breastfeeding include both nutritional value and disease protection for as long as breastfeeding continues. Breastfeeding boosts the immune system through the cells, hormones, and antibodies found in breastmilk. There is no comparison between breastmilk and formula in terms of optimal nutrition for infants and young children. Children who are breastfed are half as likely to have any illness during their first year of life when compared to their formula-fed counterparts. Additionally, these immunity benefits improve the longer a child breastfeeds. Multiple studies show that children who are *not* breastfed suffer from higher rates of death, meningitis, childhood leukemia and other cancers, diabetes, respiratory illnesses, bacterial and viral infections, diarrhea, otitis media, allergies, obesity, and developmental delays.

During breastfeeding, the mother responds to her child's hunger, sleep, and distress cues. Lengthy separations are difficult to navigate for both the mother and child and puts the breastfeeding relationship into jeopardy. An important consideration for infants is that they are able to maintain their emotional attachment to a person rather than being forced to switch to an inanimate object such as a bottle. For families going through enormous changes, this loving connection is tantamount in the life of a child. Limiting the father's access to his child, however, is not the intent of this request. I ask the court to support the irreproducible breastfeeding relationship and recommend shorter periods of separation from the mother, including no overnight visits until after the child has weaned.

I ask that you please consider the research presented within when making recommendations on the custody agreement for this particular case. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Most sincerely yours,

Signature