



## **Common Sense Breastfeeding**

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To Whom It May Concern:

It's no secret to those of us who help women breastfeed: Midwives provide the better starting point. The support they give to women and their knowledge of non-surgical birth allow for a more instinctive, smoother start for mothers and babies. The quick recovery from birth and the normal flow of instincts usually lead to better breastfeeding success. Better breastfeeding success leads to lower health costs for mother and baby for the rest of their lives.

We at Common Sense Breastfeeding would put it another way. The unnecessary interventions that accompany non-midwifery births and the resulting shorter breastfeeding duration lead to higher health care costs throughout life. The mothers are at increased risk of osteoporosis, certain cancers, and perhaps heart disease. The babies are at increased risk for a host of problems, from SIDS to such autoimmune diseases as diabetes.

Studies from around the world have established the economic and health value of midwifed births. UNICEF and the World Health Organization's Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative was begun in 1991 because these two respected organizations realized that it was hospitals, not home births, that were putting breastfeeding at risk.

Birth outcomes are improved with midwifery care; long-term health problems are diminished. Why on earth would we tie the hands of one of the best, most cost-effective health workers we have?

Midwives are low-cost. They're committed. They are recognized the world over as a safe and reliable resource. They ask only that they be allowed to practice an art that has eased millions of mothers and babies into their life together. Anything that can be done to promote easy access to licensed midwives in all their chosen settings is a step toward more sane health care for all. Anything that stands in the way of the free practice of midwives becomes one more health care mess that we can no longer afford.

Respectfully,

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