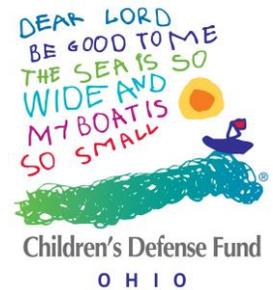


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Ashon McKenzie, Policy Director
614-221-2244
amckenzie@childrensdefense.org

Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director
614-221-2244
rmayadev@childrensdefense.org



Breastfeeding – A Lifesaver for Our Most Vulnerable Babies

COLUMBUS – Determined to see all babies reach their first birthday, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio (CDF-Ohio) released a new policy brief – [*Delivering Better Outcomes for Black Babies through Breastfeeding.*](#)

Nationwide, Ohio ranks as the 45th worst state for infant mortality, and Ohio's Black infant mortality rate is among the worst in the country. Black babies are three times more likely to die before their first birthday than White babies. The new policy brief uncovers the benefits of breastfeeding on infant and maternal health and provides Ohio's breastfeeding rate and corresponding racial disparity. For future action, a robust recommendation section highlights steps to support and increase the number of breastfeeding mothers.

"We must look at every possible solution to remedy our infant mortality problem. Breastfeeding is a low cost and accessible solution to improve maternal and infant health." said Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director of CDF-Ohio. "While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends six months of exclusive breastfeeding, Ohio lags behind the national average, especially for Black mothers. We can make this recommendation a reality for mothers."

- Only 18.6% of Ohio's Black babies are exclusively breastfed three months after birth, compared to 41.4% of White babies.
- By six months, exclusive breastfeeding for Black babies is down to 3.8% compared to 16.8% for White babies.

Breastfeeding barriers common to all mothers – no paid family leave, unsupportive work environments, and challenges in healthcare and nutrition support – disproportionately affect Black mothers, who are overrepresented in Ohio's low-income brackets.

CDF-Ohio's brief offers solutions to support women and families including covered home visits from lactation consultants, statewide paid family leave, hospital requirements to promote breastfeeding starting in the delivery room, and leveraging the established Ohio Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children Nutrition (WIC) to better serve Black mothers.

We cannot turn back progress for mothers. As Congress proceeds with the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), there are a number of important breastfeeding provisions at risk. Under the ACA, qualifying employers are required to provide women break time and space (i.e., not the bathroom) to express milk for up to a year after giving birth. The ACA also requires most health plans to offer some level of breastfeeding support and equipment, including breast pumps.

"It is essential that Ohio take proactive steps to eliminate barriers to breastfeeding," explains CDF-Ohio Policy Director Ashon McKenzie. "Ohio's babies are depending on us."

Quick facts and Infographics: [*Delivering Better Outcomes Infographics*](#)
Policy brief: [*Delivering Better Outcomes for Black Babies through Breastfeeding*](#)

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The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

395 East Broad Street, Suite 330, Columbus, OH 43215
25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001

p (614) 221-2244
p (202) 662-3510

f (614) 221-2247
w www.cdfohio.org