

## **Bennett, Paige**

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**From:** Jarold Johnston <jaroldjohnston@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 05, 2016 1:13 PM  
**To:** DHSR.SMFP.Petitions-Comments  
**Subject:** Comment regarding Pediatric and Lactation Support - Mother's Helper

I would like to comment on the need for skilled nursing care specific to maternal-child population of North Carolina, specifically Wake and Cumberland Counties.

I have been a lactation consultant and Midwife for the last 12 years. As such I have had the opportunity to care for hundreds of women and their newborns. It is well known that while breastfeeding is a natural mammalian function, little to nothing is known about this phenomenon in the medical field and the vast majority of health care providers are unprepared to handle even the smallest problems without resorting to formula supplementation, which hampers breastfeeding success. It is also well known that more than 85% of new mothers report significant breastfeeding problems. I would ask the members of the committee to recall their own experiences, either personal or that of a spouse, when it came to nursing your child, was it easy? Where were the questions? Did you know who to ask for help? And if you did ask your doctor for help, how helpful were they? My experience has demonstrated that the answer to most of those questions would be negative.

In her 2012 Call to action to support breastfeeding, Surgeon General Regina Benson identified failure to breastfeed as a public health crisis. It is well known that babies who are not breastfed face life long issues and increased risk for a multitude of diseases. It is also well known that mothers who rely on Medicaid are less likely to successfully breastfeed, often due to lack of social support. This is a social determinant of health that is harming the most fragile among us. Unfortunately, the health care system is ill prepared to help.

Who are these women to turn to in North Carolina? While most hospitals have full time lactation consultants on staff for the in-patient population, out-patient visits are very difficult to obtain. Skilled lactation consultants are rare in North Carolina, and those that are available are difficult to find and even more difficult to access. Again, recalling your own experience, most new mothers find it hard to leave the home in the first two weeks postpartum, when help is most desperately needed. The lack of sleep, soreness from birth injuries and episiotomy, or a cesarean delivery all make it difficult to pack up the baby and drive to a health care facility for help. It often becomes much easier to simply offer the baby a bottle and say that breastfeeding simply didn't work for that mother.

Mother's Helper home healthcare is offering to seek out and travel to those new mothers. As a home health company, Mother's Helper is well suited for going to the patient and her newborn, and their lactation consultants can provide the needed help in those first two weeks when it is needed most.

I urge you to accept this application and any others like it. The women and infants of North Carolina need your help, and they need it now.

Tom Johnston  
Fayetteville and Fort Bragg, NC

*"I believe breastfeeding is far more than a health issue. For me, it was a way to take care of myself and my babies, not just a way to feed them. It was an activity, a life stage, that shaped me as a person and permeated my relationships with my children, family, and friends"* - Chris Mulford, Feb 2011.