URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, IN CONSULTATION WITH
THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM TO ENCOURGE
BREASTFEEDING AMONG MOTHERS WHO RECEIVE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
FROM MEDICAID.

WHEREAS, although the health benefits of breastfeeding are
well-established, few budget analysts consider breastfeeding as
a health cost-savings strategy; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture's
Economic Research Service estimates that at least $3,600,000,000
in medical expenses could be saved each year if the number of
children breastfed for at least six months increased from forty-three per cent for babies born in 2006, to fifty per cent, as
recommended by the United States Surgeon General; and

WHEREAS, a study reported in Pediatrics concluded that, for
every one thousand babies who are not breastfed, there are 2,033
more medical office visits, 212 extra days of hospitalization,
and 609 excess prescriptions; and

WHEREAS, breastfed infants experience fewer or less severe
cases of diarrhea, respiratory infections, pneumonia, urinary
infections, and ear infections. Breastfeeding also is
associated with a lower risk of asthma, childhood obesity,
diabetes, childhood leukemia, and sudden infant death syndrome;
and

WHEREAS, in addition to the benefits to babies, mothers who
breastfeed experience less postpartum bleeding, an earlier
return to pre-pregnancy weight, a reduced risk of ovarian cancer
and premenopausal breast cancer, and a lower risk of
osteoporosis; and

WHEREAS, forty-one per cent of births in the country are
covered by Medicaid, and increasing breastfeeding rates among
these infants may be one potential strategy for state budget
savings; and
WHEREAS, young mothers, those with less formal education, and African-American mothers are the least likely to breastfeed. In 2006, only twenty-four per cent of mothers under age twenty breastfed their infants at six months of age, compared with 50.4 per cent of mothers age thirty or older; and

WHEREAS, the National Business Group on Health notes that workplace breastfeeding programs may reduce health care costs by decreasing the risk of some health issues for women and children, reducing lost productivity and reducing absenteeism associated with caring for a sick child; and

WHEREAS, in the current fiscally challenging environment, the State would be wise to seek additional ways to reduce health care costs by considering the economic benefits of breastfeeding; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Health, is urged to develop a program to encourage breastfeeding among mothers who receive medical assistance from Medicaid; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Directors of Human Services and Health.

OFFERED BY:  

[Signatures]

[Date: MAR 04 2010]