The Honorable Michael Allen  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0007

Re: AB 2386 (Allen) - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Allen:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am writing to express our support for AB 2386 (Allen), which would amend the definition of sex discrimination in the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) to include breastfeeding and medical conditions related to lactation in order to prevent breastfeeding discrimination against new mothers at work.

First 5 LA, a child advocacy and public grant making organization, was created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues to improve the lives of children from prenatal through age five in Los Angeles County. One of our goals is to increase breastfeeding supports to improve the health and well-being of infants.

Breastfeeding is universally recognized as a low-cost intervention that protects the health of mothers and babies while reducing health care costs. Health care organizations and professionals around the world accept breastfeeding as one of the most important preventive care measures for children’s health. The benefits are greatest when babies are breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life.

In California, an impressive 90 percent of women begin to breastfeed in the hospital; however only 59 percent are still breastfeeding at 6 months postpartum. Workplace issues have been cited as one of the main reasons women stop breastfeeding. Under existing law is it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sex, which includes gender, pregnancy, childbirth and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth. Yet issues surrounding breastfeeding are rarely, if ever, addressed in workplace sexual harassment training, and most employees don’t think that comments about breastfeeding would be considered sexual harassment.
AB 2386 would provide that the term "sex" includes breastfeeding or medical conditions related to breastfeeding, for the purposes of this act. This bill is important not only because it would make it unlawful to discriminate for breastfeeding, but also because it could substantially alter the workplace culture to be more accepting of breastfeeding as the normal way to feed babies, protecting the civil right of mothers and babies to breastfeed.

For these reasons, we support the passage of AB 2386.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Steele
Interim Chief Executive Officer
First 5 LA

cc: California Assembly and Senate - Los Angeles County delegation