



March 22, 2019

Hon. Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Request to Raise Rates for Quality Breast Pumps & Supplies Under Medi-Cal: (*Maximum Cost \$7 Million Annually*)

Dear Senator Mitchell:

We respectfully ask for a rate increase under Medi-Cal for quality breast pumps and related supplies due to the fact that some women on Medi-Cal do not have access to high quality breast pumps because the reimbursement rates are too low.

Rates for these breast pumps have not been raised since 1998! Low quality breast pumps may yield little or no milk, preventing mothers from establishing or maintaining breastfeeding, which impacts their baby's feeding and ultimately overall health. Lack of quality breast pumps through Medi-Cal has forced new mothers to search for alternative providers, such as WIC, to cover gaps in breast pumps and related supplies. This is supposed to be the responsibility of Medi-Cal.

Our proposal would focus upon breast pumps known as "personal single use pumps" and would take the low \$93 rate up to \$186. The total maximum cost estimate for this State Budget proposal would be \$7 million per year, although with some of the quality breast pumps also available at local WIC sites, we believe that the annual cost would actually end up being much lower.

Science proves that when infants are breastfed, their risk for obesity is reduced. Breastfeeding is also responsible for the reduction in many childhood illnesses including ear infections, digestive and lower respiratory infections and other serious illnesses. Studies also show that breastfeeding leads to reduced risk of both breast and ovarian cancer in mothers.

By providing this modest rate increase for quality breast pumps and related supplies in Medi-Cal, CA could realize a savings from \$405,00 to \$940,000 per 100,000 women by providing this improved breastfeeding service and support. Access to high quality breast pumps can also help lead to optimal breastfeeding rates, which could reduce medical costs related to infant illness by \$1.6 million per 100,000 women!

For all of these reasons, we urge your support for this proposal when it is heard in the **Senate Budget Subcommittee on Health (Sub #3) on April 25th** and in the final State Budget proposal later this spring.

Respectfully,

Karen Farley

Karen Farley, Executive Director
CA WIC Association

Terri Cowger Hill

Terri Cowger Hill, Legislative Advocate
CA WIC Association

Cc: Hon. Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget Committee
Hon. Richard Pan, M.D., Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health
Hon. Members & Consultants of Senate Budget Committee
Richard “Fig” Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Governor’s Office
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Governor’s Office
Dr. Mark Ghaly, CA H&HS Secretary
Michelle Baass, CA H&HS Undersecretary
Jennifer Kent, DHCS Director
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Carol Gallegos, DHCS Director for Legislation
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