



## Low Quality Breast Pumps Put California Children's Health at Risk

### *Medi-Cal Rate Increase for Breast Pumps and Supplies Needed*

#### Access Barriers

Women on Medi-Cal do not have access to high quality breast pumps because reimbursement rates are too low.

- Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for breastfeeding support **have not increased since 1998**.
- Low quality breast pumps may yield little or no milk, preventing mothers from establishing or maintaining breastfeeding, **impacting their baby's feeding – and ultimately overall health**.
- Low income women are **already less likely to breastfeed** and more likely to stop breastfeeding early.
- 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 pump supplies. **This is the responsibility of Medi-Cal.**

#### Health Barriers

All mothers should have access to high quality breast pumps to support breastfeeding and help prevent childhood illness and obesity.

- Science proves that when infants are breastfed, **their risk for obesity is reduced**, especially if they are exclusively breastfed for more than three months.
- Research has shown **breastfeeding is responsible for a reduction in many childhood illnesses** including ear, digestive and lower respiratory infections and other serious health issues.
- In California, obesity rates among low-income children between 2-5 years old are **higher than the national average and nearly 1 in 5 is overweight**.
- Studies suggest breastfeeding leads to **reduced risk of breast & ovarian cancer in mothers**.

#### THE SOLUTION

A modest \$7 million annual increase in the Medi-Cal breastfeeding support budget will help ensure all mothers have the opportunity to successfully breastfeed their babies using effective breast pumps, saving Medi-Cal costs in the long run.

- Medi-Cal could realize **savings from \$405,000 to \$940,000 per 100,000 women** by providing improved breastfeeding services and support, including high quality breast pumps.
- Access to high quality breast pumps can help lead to optimal breastfeeding rates, which could **reduce medical costs related to infant illnesses by \$1.6 million per 100,000 women**.
- Increased Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for breast pumps **will help avoid strains on other providers** like WIC, who have become the de facto quality breast pump provider for Medi-Cal recipients.

Low-income women **should not be subject to barriers** that prevent them from breastfeeding their babies and giving them the best chance for a healthy life.