

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 12, 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: ALYIA GASKINS, COUNCILWOMAN

SUBJECT: OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding provides numerous nutritional and health benefits for infants, mothers, and communities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infants who are breastfed have lower risks of chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and obesity. Additionally, mothers who breastfeed have lower risks of high blood pressure, ovarian cancer, and breast cancer.

Despite these benefits, families face barriers when it comes to breastfeeding. The purpose of this memo is to request support in directing the City Manager to work with staff to allocate time to identify opportunities to create more accessible and welcoming environments for mothers, including those on city staff and in the community, as well as more informed and supported families.

In 2011, then Vice Mayor Donley and Councilman Krupicka proposed the creation of an ordinance to amend the City Code to exempt breastfeeding from the City's Indecent Exposure Ordinance. The ordinance passed and resulted in other important changes to support mothers in Alexandria who wish to breastfeed their children.

Eleven years have passed since these reforms were implemented. Now is the opportune time to reassess current policies to ensure breastfeeding families have the support they need.

I am seeking support to direct the City Manager to work with the Alexandria Health Department, the Department of General Services, the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Community and Human Services, and the City Attorney to:

- **Short-term goals:**
 - Ensure current ordinances and city policies support best practices for:
 - Appropriate accommodations
 - Use of breaks and leave by lactating employees for expressing breastmilk
 - Lactation room availability

- Storage of expressed breastmilk
- Evaluate current lactation room standards, consistency, and number of rooms across the city and confirm points of contact for each as well as a process for ensuring rooms remain in compliance with established standards
- Consolidate all existing educational and support resources (e.g., locations, programs, classes, equipment, and services) for those breastfeeding into one accessible source
- Explore opportunities to partner with local businesses, health care providers, and other community stakeholders on a city-wide education campaign
- **Long-term goals:**
 - Assess the unmet need for lactation room supports around the city (both provided by the city and by the private sector) and develop a process for evaluating future needs
 - Assess the gaps in access to, or usage in, breastfeeding education and resources
 - Evaluate evidence-based public health interventions for increasing breastfeeding and the needed resources to implement this work in Alexandria. This evaluation would consider stronger referral systems to existing resources, policies, and programs
 - Seek feedback from The Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria and relevant boards and commissions such as the Commission for Women and the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission
 - Explore the feasibility of adding a lactation room or pod on the first floor of City Hall that is accessible to visitors and participants in boards and commission meetings, legislative meetings, public hearings, etc.

Supportive policies, convenient locations, and coordinated supports can help families reach their breastfeeding goals. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding in Alexandria is aligned with the Council's priorities of supporting youth and families and ensuring we are a workplace of choice where employees feel valued.

Cc:

Jim Parajon, City Manager

Dr. David Rose, Director, Alexandria Health Department

Jeremy McPike, Director, General Services

Janet K. Manuel, Chief Human Resources Officer

Kate Garvey, Director, Department of Community and Human Services