

Proposal for Lactation Accommodations in North Carolina Public Schools



Submitted to: North Carolina Department of Education Board
Prepared by: North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

Executive Summary

Despite legal protections, **North Carolina public school teachers, staff, students, and authorized visitors** continue to face **barriers to breastfeeding and pumping** due to **insufficient break times, lack of designated lactation spaces, and workplace stigma**.

This proposal calls for a **statewide Lactation Accommodation Policy** that builds upon the **existing successes of five Breastfeeding-Friendly Community Partner local school districts**:

- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, Orange County Schools, Richmond County Schools, Public Schools of Robeson County, and Montgomery County Schools

Additionally, **Durham County Public Schools** has issued a **proclamation in support of lactating teachers and students**, further demonstrating the need for **statewide policy expansion**.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Protected lactation breaks during the school day for teachers, staff, and students
 - A reasonable length (15-30 minutes every 3-4 hours) as a guideline for lactating individuals
- Accessible sanitary lactation spaces that are secure and reserved for lactating in every public school
- Protection from discrimination and job retaliation
- Compliance and enforcement measures for statewide accountability

By adopting this policy, the **North Carolina Department of Education** can ensure that **every public school provides safe, equitable lactation accommodations** that align with **federal law, state best practices, and proven local models**.



THE PROBLEM:

Teachers & Students Struggling to Pump in Schools

First-Hand Accounts from North Carolina Educators

Despite their dedication to education, many North Carolina teachers and students are forced to pump in unsanitary, unsafe, and inconvenient conditions.

Tiffany's Story – “I had **no private space** to pump, so I ended up **sitting on the bathroom floor** with my pump plugged into an outlet by the sink.”



Another North Carolina Teacher's Story – “By mid-day, my boobs were so full that I just began **leaking everywhere**. I'm here teaching these babies basic life skills, and I don't even have the time to provide my own baby with food for **survival**.”

Love Anderson's Story – “With my first baby, I was given **no time to pump** during End of Course testing, and my body started to physically break down. By the end of the statement mandated extended t[esting period], **I leaked** through my shirt and my jacket and my shoes were **soaked in milk**. I **developed mastitis** because I couldn't pump when I needed to. I knew I wanted to have more kids. Eventually, **I left the teaching profession**. It was **a choice** between the **well being of my children** and **my profession**, I choose **family**.”



One North Carolina teacher said – “On top of being **physically uncomfortable** to even **painful**, it was very **emotionally challenging** as well.

I was still expected to show up for duties before and after school, stay late to take tickets for sporting events. It became an entire day of **scrambling to pump** whenever I possibly could. There were times where my **pumping sessions were interrupted** due to a student needing to get their belongings from my classroom (I had to pump in my classroom with the door locked because there was **nowhere else to go**).

Ultimately, **I ended up stopping** around 6 months (as opposed to my goal of 1 year) because I just couldn't continue experiencing all that anymore.”

“I have a friend who had a **custodian walk in on her pumping**, *even though* her door was locked and she had a sign up saying to come back later.”

WHY NORTH CAROLINA MUST ACT NOW

Existing Models of Success: The Five Breastfeeding-Friendly School Districts



TRAINED SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND HR PERSONNEL ON COMPLIANCE.



ESTABLISHED CLEAR POLICIES ENSURING TEACHERS AND STAFF GET PROTECTED LACTATION BREAKS.



CREATED PRIVATE LACTATION ROOMS IN MULTIPLE SCHOOL BUILDINGS.



DURHAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' LEADERSHIP

In 2025, Durham County Public Schools issued a proclamation recognizing the **need for improved lactation accommodations**. This leadership **sets a precedent** for the rest of the state to follow. However, without **statewide enforcement**, many educators, staff, and students across **other districts remain unprotected**.



These actions have demonstrated **positive results**, such as improved teacher retention, higher job satisfaction, and increased teacher-student well-being. However, **without consistent statewide enforcement**, many educators and staff in other districts **continue to face challenges** and **remain unprotected**. To build on this success and create a more equitable environment, North Carolina **must act now** to implement uniform lactation policies across all districts.

The Solution: A Statewide Lactation Policy for North Carolina Public Schools

1. Protected Lactation Breaks

- Teachers, staff, and students must have protected pumping or breastfeeding breaks.
- Lactating teachers should be exempt from lunch duty and non-instructional supervision.
 - This will ensure lactating teachers will have dedicated time to pump without losing valuable work time
- Schools must provide flexible scheduling and/or substitute coverage for pumping teachers.

2. Dedicated Lactation Spaces

- Schools must have a designated, private space for lactation that is:
 - NOT a bathroom
 - Lockable with privacy signage
 - Equipped with seating, an electrical outlet, and a refrigerator
 - Close to work areas to reduce time lost

3. Protection from Retaliation & Discrimination

- Employees should not experience penalties for lactation needs.
- Schools must provide reasonable accommodations for lactating students.
- Compliance officers should ensure fair enforcement of policies.

4. Compliance & Accountability

- Each school district must designate a Lactation Compliance Officer.
- Schools must submit annual reports detailing their lactation policies and compliance.
- Non-compliance should lead to corrective actions and oversight.



LEGAL JUSTIFICATION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Federal & State Laws Protect Lactating Workers & Students

- **Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act** (FLSA, 2010) – Requires break time and private space for lactating employees.
- **Title IX of the Education Amendments** (Updated 2023) – Protects lactating students by requiring reasonable accommodations.
- **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act** – Prohibits employment discrimination based on lactation.

Economic & Health Benefits of Implementing This Policy

- **Lower Teacher Turnover** – Schools with lactation policies retain teachers longer.
- **Healthier Students & Staff** – Breastfeeding reduces illness, absenteeism, and postpartum depression.
- **Legal & Financial Protection** – Prevents lawsuits, financial penalties, and public backlash.

Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Policy Development & Training (3-6 Months)

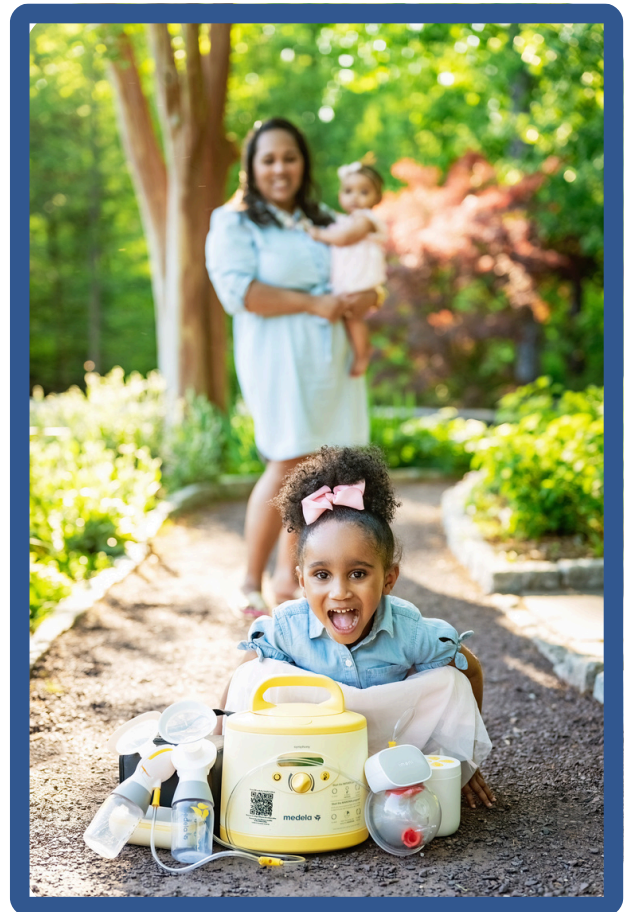
- Finalize statewide lactation accommodation policy.
- Train school administrators, HR, and teachers.
- Assess lactation space needs in each school.

Phase 2: Statewide Rollout & Awareness (6-12 Months)

- Require all school districts to adopt and implement the policy.
- Provide public awareness materials for teachers, staff, and students.
- Launch a statewide campaign.

Phase 3: Compliance Monitoring & Accountability (Ongoing)

- Conduct annual compliance audits.
- Provide a complaint resolution process for violations.
- Offer grants and funding to districts implementing lactation spaces.



Resources for support

Nationwide help at your fingertips

Questions about Pregnancy & Birth

Lamaze International | www.lamaze.org

Breastfeeding Questions

Office on Women's Health

www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding

Phone Helpline: 800-994-9662

M-F 9am–6pm (eastern time)

La Leche League (LLLl)

www.llli.org (Click on Resources tab)

Doula Support for Labor & Delivery

American Pregnancy Association

<https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/labor-and-birth/having-a-doula/>

Finding a Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group

Baby Cafe | www.babycafeusa.org

Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association | <http://blackmothersbreastfeeding.org/>

Breastfeeding USA |

<http://breastfeedingusa.org>

La Leche League (LLLl)

www.llli.org (enter your address into the map)

Mocha Moms | www.mochamoms.org

Finding a Lactation Consultant

International Lactation Consultant Association

www.ilca.org (Click on Find a Lactation Consultant on the bottom menu bar)

Postpartum Support

4th Trimester Project

<https://newmomhealth.com/>

African American Breastfeeding Support

Office on Women's Health–It's Only Natural |

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/its-only-natural>

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

www.fns.usda.gov/WIC

National and State Breastfeeding Laws

National Conference of State Legislatures

www.ncsl.org/research/health/breastfeeding-state-laws.aspx

Infant Feeding Guidelines

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/health-topics/breastfeeding>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/

Milk Storage Guidelines

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm

Donor Human Milk Information

Human Milk Banking Association of America

(HMBANA) | www.hmbana.org

Nutrition Guidelines

MyPlate's Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

www.myplate.gov/life-stages/pregnancy-and-breastfeeding

Medication Use

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

During Pregnancy |

www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/meds/treatingfortwo/index.html

While Breastfeeding |

www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/index.html

LactMed Drugs & Lactation Database

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/

Conclusion & Call to Action

North Carolina's teachers, staff, and students deserve safe and equitable lactation accommodations.

We urge the North Carolina Department of Education to:

- **Adopt this policy statewide**
- **Ensure proper enforcement across all public schools**
- **Support funding for lactation spaces and teacher accommodations**

By adopting this policy, the North Carolina Department of Education has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the health and well-being of its students and educators, leading the way for creating inclusive, supportive, and equitable schools

Respectfully submitted,

North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

<https://www.ncbfc.org/>

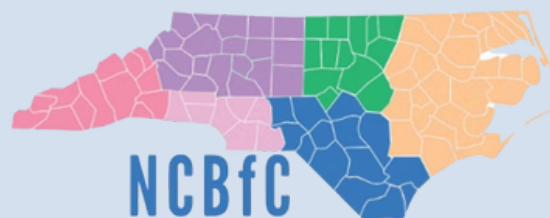
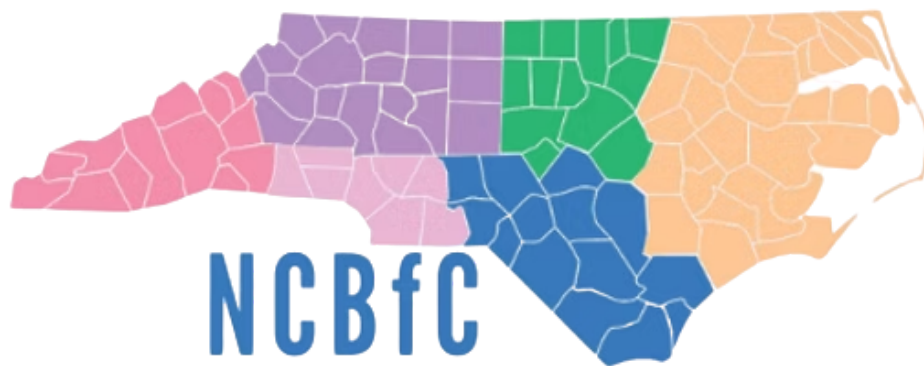


Photo Credits

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For more information please visit, <https://www.ncbfc.org/>

Reviewed 8/15/2025



Subject: Urgent Policy Proposal: Protecting Lactating Teachers in North Carolina Schools

Dear Members of the North Carolina State Board of Education,

I'm writing on behalf of the North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition (NCBfC) to submit a critical policy proposal designed to protect the rights and health of lactating teachers across North Carolina.

Despite existing federal protections, many educators in our state continue to face barriers to expressing milk at work, ranging from a lack of private spaces to pressure from administrators and limited break time. These challenges contribute to early breastfeeding cessation, increased teacher burnout, and even attrition, particularly among teachers who are parents of young children.

Our proposal offers clear, evidence-based policy solutions that can be adopted at the state level to ensure consistency and accountability across all school districts. It is grounded in both legal precedent and personal testimonies from North Carolina teachers who have courageously shared their experiences.

Protecting lactating teachers is not only a matter of compliance, it is a matter of public health, workplace equity, and educator retention. By advancing policies that support lactating parents, the Board has the opportunity to lead on an issue that affects teacher well-being, student continuity, and gender equity in our schools.

We urge you to review the attached proposal and consider adopting its recommendations as part of your ongoing commitment to supporting North Carolina educators. We would welcome the opportunity to present our findings in more detail or answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to North Carolina educators.

North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

<https://www.ncbfc.org/>