

Month Date, Year

Honorable XXXXX
XXth District Court
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Re: Defendant's First and Last Name

Dear Judge XXXXX:

We are writing in support of Defendant's First and Last Name in regards to sentencing in your courtroom on Month Date, Year. The intent of this letter is to ask you to consider the importance of the breastfeeding relationship between Defendant's First Name and her child and to encourage alternatives to jail time when you make your decision. The dangers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic along with the risks associated with early weaning if separation were to occur would place additional strain on both Defendant's First Name and all of her children during this time of uncertainty.

Human milk protects infants and young children from COVID-19. Breastfeeding is a public health imperative for families in our society and meets the nutritional, developmental, and emotional needs of infants and young children. The World Health Organization recommends that breastfeeding should continue until at least two years of age or as long as mutually desired by mother and child. Most importantly, human milk saves lives especially during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The benefits of human milk include both nutritional value and disease protection for as long as breastfeeding continues. Human milk boosts the immune system through cells, hormones, and antibodies, and recent studies demonstrate that *human milk contains antibodies for COVID19 (SARS-CoV-2) and neutralizes virus activity providing immune protection for breastfed infants*. Breastfeeding reduces infant mortality, providing direct disease protection during the most vulnerable first year of life and beyond.

There are also serious risks associated with not allowing Defendant's First Name to express her milk. Milk expression is a vital medical need. Premature weaning frequently causes: mastitis (breast infection); decrease in milk supply; physical pain from engorgement (inflammation of the breasts); and emotional distress. Breastfeeding promotes maternal-infant attachment in addition to better health outcomes for both mother and child. Suggested: provide a potential alternative, e.g. "A substance abuse program that could facilitate her rehabilitation, along with ensuring that her child continues to receive human milk, would be more beneficial to all involved rather than any jail time."

In light of the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the necessity of continued access to human milk for Defendant's First Name child, we are asking that Defendant's First Name not be sentenced to any time in jail.

An additional, less favorable option in light of COVID-19, is providing access to a pump and courier service to ensure her baby is able to access her milk while Defendant's First Name is incarcerated.

- Michigan Breastfeeding Network and Oakland County Breastfeeding Coalition offer technical assistance and sample policy for jails to implement milk expression accommodations for lactating mothers and are ready to collaborate with the Oakland County Jail if the necessity arises

- Mama’s Mobile Milk, a human milk delivery service specifically designed to counter maternal/infant separation and provided by Southeast Michigan IBCLC’s of Color, is fully equipped to provide this service for **Defendant’s First Name** and her infant.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Names of signatories, organizations and/or people