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INAAP is Incorporated in Indiana



January 15, 2021

The Honorable Eric Holcomb
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Via Email

Dear Governor Holcomb:

My name is Monisola Adesanya, and I write on behalf of Indiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in support of HB 1358 which would provide certain pregnancy accommodations to expecting mothers in Indiana.

As a Pediatric resident, I am fortunate to work with families of truly diverse backgrounds. Many of these families have trouble providing basic necessities to their household, and this situation has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, I was delighted to care for an adorable 3-year-old girl who had an infection in her tonsils that required a hospital admission. While obtaining the history from her mother, I gained a small glimpse into their life. Her mother was 28 weeks pregnant and working two jobs in order to make ends meet. She and her child did not have medical insurance. She shared that she had no one to help assist financially. We know more and more women are becoming the head of their households with over 317,000 Indiana households headed by women. These are women cannot afford to lose their jobs. Many are also afraid to seek accommodation for pregnancy from employers due to risk of termination. It is imperative that HB 1358 is passed to help these mothers obtain the accommodations they need to keep the mothers and their babies healthy.

Working while pregnant is generally safe and is not a risk factor for preterm birth. Furthermore, mothers working in high-risk occupations or those with medically complicated pregnancies generally only need small accommodations to allow for continued safe employment. For example, forms of employment that require standing for long periods can be hard on the pregnant body causing back and leg pain. Standing for long periods can also reduce blood flow to the fetus and may be detrimental to the developing child. A simple solution, a stool, can help relieve pregnancy-associated pain, and allow these mothers to continue to support their families and to have healthier pregnancies and babies. HB 1358 will ensure employers accommodate pregnant workers on the job.

Currently, Indiana has a 10% premature birth rate. Research has found reductions in pre-term birth when women modify their exposure to certain work conditions. The statewide infant mortality rate fell from 6.8 per 1,000 live in 2018 births to 6.5 in 2019, with the mortality rate among Black babies falling from 13.0 to 11.0 due to the many efforts made during your administration*. However, Indiana does not have legislation that protects pregnant and lactating mother's right to

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have simple accommodations to support a safe pregnancy while employed. Federal law prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy (Pregnancy Discrimination Act) and on disability (Americans with Disabilities Act), but there is no clear federal law specifying when an employer must provide accommodations. We would like to clarify this support and join states like Kentucky and Tennessee who have passed laws that require employers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers. Indiana would become the 31st state to adopt similar laws.

HB 1358 will provide protections that will benefit babies, mothers, employers, and our communities. It may also increase the likelihood that families can bond, and new mothers can breastfeed after a child is born because they have not had to use up accrued time off during pregnancy. All of these things are wins for our state and for our state's children.

For all of these reasons, INAAP supports HB 1358, and we thank you for your leadership on this issue. If there is anything we can do to assist in your efforts, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Sarah Stelzner
Advocacy Committee Chair, Indiana Chapter
of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Monisola Adesanya
Member, Indiana Chapter
of the American Academy of Pediatrics