

Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition Responds to Georgia Supreme Court Ruling, Urges Support for Clinical Lactation Care and Insurance Coverage to Address Disparities in Breastfeeding Rates and Access

The Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition, a statewide organization dedicated to promoting and supporting breastfeeding in Georgia, responds to the recent Georgia Supreme Court ruling in the case of Jackson et al. v Raffensperger, which declared Georgia's Lactation Practice Act as unconstitutional.

The coalition emphasizes the urgent need for clinical lactation care provided by International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) to address the existing disparities in breastfeeding rates and access across the state, as called for in the 2011 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding. Furthermore, the coalition advocates for comprehensive insurance coverage of clinical lactation care, both in the public and private sectors, to ensure that all Georgia families have access to these vital services.

The ruling by the Georgia Supreme Court has raised concerns regarding the legal framework for lactation licensure in our state. This decision has the potential to hinder the provision of specialized lactation care by trained professionals, which is essential for promoting positive maternal and infant health outcomes. In response, the Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition advocates for the following:

1. **Clinical Lactation Care:** Clinical lactation care provided by highly trained and certified IBCLCs is a crucial component of comprehensive breastfeeding support. IBCLCs possess specialized knowledge and skills to address complex breastfeeding challenges, such as anatomical and endocrine issues interfering with feeding and milk production. The coalition emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting clinical lactation care both in hospital and community settings as a vital service that ensures the success and well-being of breastfeeding families.
2. **Insurance Coverage:** The Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition calls for comprehensive insurance coverage of clinical lactation care for both public and private insurance plans. By ensuring that IBCLC services are covered, families can access the necessary support without financial barriers. Insurance coverage plays a pivotal role in addressing the existing disparities in breastfeeding rates and access, enabling all Georgia families to receive quality lactation care regardless of their socioeconomic status.
3. **Increased Continuity of Care:** To ensure the success of breastfeeding, it is essential to establish and maintain continuity of care throughout the breastfeeding journey. Access to breastfeeding support and clinical lactation care varies widely for Georgia families by geographical region and demographic groups. The Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition calls for all Georgia families to receive quality, evidenced based breastfeeding education, support and clinical care during the prenatal period, at the birthing hospital, and in the postpartum period. The coalition believes that families are best supported with timely

access to multiple levels of care including peer support, breastfeeding educators and counselors as well as clinical lactation care provided by IBCLC's and breastfeeding medicine providers.

In addition, the Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition acknowledges the valuable role played by community lactation support providers, including peer counselors, support group leaders, and breastfeeding counselors. These individuals and groups provide crucial emotional support, practical assistance, and community-based resources to breastfeeding families.

However, many Georgia families need clinical lactation care during their breastfeeding journey. The coalition emphasizes the distinction between community-based lactation support and clinical lactation care provided by IBCLCs and breastfeeding medicine providers. These valuable community resources should be complemented by clinical lactation care to ensure comprehensive and evidence-based support for breastfeeding families.

The Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for comprehensive breastfeeding support and lactation continuity of care that encompasses both clinical expertise and community-based assistance. By prioritizing evidenced based strategies, creating community networks of breastfeeding support, and advocating for insurance coverage of clinical lactation care, we can work towards equitable access to breastfeeding resources and improve maternal and infant health outcomes across Georgia.