Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition

January 7, 2013

The Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition lauds and strongly supports the recent release of the Maryland Hospital Breastfeeding Policy Recommendations by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). As part of these recommendations, in an effort to protect and improve maternal and infant health in our state, **we write today to urge your hospital *to join with all hospitals in Maryland in discontinuing the distribution of commercial infant formula discharge bags***. The initiative to ban the practice of marketing formula by health care institutions and professionals in all birthing hospitals is supported by DHMH's recommendations, as well as other public health authorities, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, and the 2011 Surgeon General'sReport.[1]

Banning the bag is feasible! Hospital X can join those hospitals that have committed to protecting breastfeeding and refuse to act as marketing agents of formula companies. Several Maryland hospitals have already banned the formula company discharge bags without significant hardship or obstacles. In the process, they have been able to simultaneously increase their marketability:

- Through working with their purchasing and marketing departments, some like Upper Chesapeake Medical Center and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital have designed and distributed their own discharge "gifts" which advertise their respective hospitals.
- Johns Hopkins Hospital stopped giving out formula samples over three years ago as part of a hospital-wide effort to stymie the marketing of pharmaceuticals within its facilities. The hospital administration has chosen not to give out a replacement bag.
- Other hospitals such as Memorial Hospital at Easton discontinued distribution at the behest of Risk Management upon investigating their liability in the event of a formula recall or a baby getting sick from expired or contaminated formula.

While these hospitals and others no longer hand out formula bags upon discharge, banning the bag never prevents a mother from obtaining free formula samples if she so requests. She can simply be directed to call the toll-free number on the back of every formula container to receive free bags, coupons, or samples.

Your hospital aims to promote the health of infants and mothers, but when providing the bag and/or formula samples, the ongoing promotion of infant formula sends the inaccurate message that these products are medically approved, endorsed, and necessary.[2]

The Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition has prepared a power point presentation to highlight the research regarding the effects of formula discharge bags and discuss further how hospitals can approach banning the bags. This brief presentation can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNxp-0bm-Ms . We encourage you to view and share it with your staff.

For more information, you can browse www.banthebags.org, and Public Citizen http://www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=5390. You can also visit the website of the Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition www.massbreastfeeding.org which has successfully led all 49 of

Massachusetts's birthing hospitals to ban the bag. Our own Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition website, www.mdbfc.org, will soon contain links to the You Tube video for staff and other resources.

Help us make Maryland the next state to successfully put the health of our youngest citizens first by banning the formula discharge bags from all birthing hospitals please contact us if the Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition can be of further assistance to you, or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Notes

1http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/mch/SitePages/hospital-bf-policy.aspx
American Academy of Pediatrics, Section on Breastfeeding. Breastfeeding and Use of Human Milk,Pediatrics; originally published online February 27, 2012.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding-related maternity practices at hospitals and birthcenters— United States, 2007. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2008;57(23):621–625.
The U.S. Surgeon General states that "marketing of infant formula should be conducted in a way thatminimizes its impact on exclusive breastfeeding." As part of this, an action items states, "Ensure that healthcare clinicians do not serve as advertisers for infant formula." U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services.The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding, 2011.

2 Bergevin, Cynthia , Y. Dougherty, and M.S. Kramer. "Do Infant Formula Samples Shorten the Duration of Breast-Feeding?"*The Lancet* 321, no. 8334 (1983): 1148-51; Donnelly, A., HM Snowden, MJ Renfrew, and MW Woolridge. "Commercial Hospital Discharge Packs for Breastfeeding Women."*Cochrane database of systematic reviews* (2000); Dungy, C.I., J. Christensen-Szalanski, M. Losch, and D. Russell. "Effect of Discharge Samples on Duration of Breast-Feeding."*Pediatrics* 90, no. 2 (1992): 233; Rosenberg, Kenneth D., Carissa A. Eastham, Laurin J. Kasehagen, and Alfredo P. Sandoval. "Marketing Infant Formula through Hospitals: The Impact of Commercial Hospital Discharge Packs on Breastfeeding."*Am J Public Health* 98, no. 2 (2008): 290-95; Snell, BJ, M. Krantz, R. Keeton, K. Delgado, and C. Peckham. "The Association of Formula Samples Given at Hospital Discharge with the Early Duration of Breastfeeding."*Journal of Human Lactation* 8, no. 2 (1992): 67; Wright, Anne, Sydney Rice, and Susan Wells. "Changing Hospital Practices to Increase the Duration of Breastfeeding." *Pediatrics* 97, no. 5 (1996): 669-75.