



## Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

### Press Release

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## **Advisory Committee Will Help Lead the Way on Workplace Expression of Milk**

*Oregon plays starring role in new national law that supports breastfeeding mothers*

**PORTLAND** – On Wednesday, October 6th, Oregon’s Expression of Milk in the Workplace Advisory Committee (EMAC) will receive updates on the enforcement of state workplace protections as well as efforts to bring Oregon law in line with the new national standard enacted earlier this year. Representatives from the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, the U.S. Department of Labor and community advocates will participate in the meeting, set for 3PM in Room 1D at 800 NE Oregon Street in Portland.

“Senator Merkley has done great work at the state and national levels on this issue,” said BOLI Commissioner Brad Avakian, who appoints members of EMAC and oversees enforcement of the law. “Building on Oregon’s experience is a recipe for success nationally, and BOLI is very pleased to work with our federal partners to ensure all nursing mothers are treated fairly by their employers.”

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) has been a champion for nursing mothers in Congress, ensuring that workplace protections for expression of milk became part of the federal health care reform bill earlier this year. As Speaker of the Oregon House in 2007, Merkley was a key advocate for Oregon’s law creating similar protections.

“BOLI’s work with partners like the Nursing Mothers Counsel of Oregon and our employer community has set a great example for other states to follow,” Sen. Merkley said. “It is much easier to bring these important protections to nursing mothers throughout the country when a success story is already being written for other states to follow.”

House Bill 2372 (2007) established EMAC as well as directing employers to provide up to 30 minutes in unpaid break time to an employee needing to express breast milk. BOLI’s Wage and Hour Division staffs EMAC and investigates complaints against employers who may not be complying with the law.

“In the next legislative session, BOLI will work to bring state law in line with the new federal standard while retaining the stronger provisions provided in Oregon law,” Avakian continued. “Giving employers one, consistent standard to follow will better protect the rights of nursing mothers in Oregon by making BOLI’s enforcement more efficient and compliance by employers more achievable.”

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