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Dear Stakeholder,

As your organization strives to provide the highest quality care for families, the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE), the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), and the Lactation Education Accreditation and Approval Review Committee (LEAARC) encourage you to consider the vital role of the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) as an essential member of the healthcare team responsible for caring for mothers and infants.

The International Board Certified Lactation Consultant is the expert in lactation and the IBCLC certification is the premier, internationally recognized measure of knowledge in lactation consulting. We hope this letter will help clarify the role and impact of the IBCLC, and we invite your organization to work with us to increase access to those who hold the IBCLC credential.

#### **What Is an IBCLC?**

Those holding the IBCLC certification are allied health care professionals in lactation care, credentialed by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE®). IBLCE is the global authority that determines the knowledge of practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care. IBLCE holds the coveted National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accreditation, a mark of excellence for certification programs. IBLCE has held this accreditation continuously since 1988, the first year it was eligible to earn this accreditation. Today, there are more than 26,000 International Board Certified Lactation Consultant certificants worldwide in 94 countries.

#### **Why Is an IBCLC Needed?**

Professionals holding the IBCLC certification have the knowledge and the clinical experience to conduct breastfeeding assessments and manage complex breastfeeding problems. As essential members of the health care team, these professionals assist with formulating evidence-based care plans that support each mother's breastfeeding goals. They develop and implement breastfeeding protocols, triage medical conditions that need to be referred, staff inpatient and outpatient breastfeeding services and clinics, and educate staff about how to improve breastfeeding care.

### **International Board Certified Lactation Consultant Professionals Make an Impact.**

- Including IBCLC professionals as part of the health care team results in **lower health care costs**. Increased access to lactation consultants reduces the cost for planned hospital care, planned follow-up visits, and unplanned care costs and results in greater continuation of breastfeeding. In one study the savings was **\$149 per delivery** (Lieu 1998).
- IBCLC professionals help **improve customer satisfaction** (Chin & Amir 2008).
- IBCLC professionals **improve breastfeeding outcomes**, and **increase the likelihood of women continuing to breastfeed post discharge**. Infants are 2.8 times more likely to be breastfeeding at hospital discharge and Medicaid-eligible patients were 4.13 times more likely to be breastfeeding at hospital discharge when IBCLC professionals are on staff (Castrucci 2006).

Because of the impact these professionals make, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, included in the 2011 *Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding* specific steps to increase access to services provided by IBCLCs. These steps are:

- Include support for lactation as an essential medical service for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children.
- Provide reimbursement for IBCLCs independent of their having other professional certification or licensure.
- Work to increase the number of racial and ethnic minority IBCLCs to better mirror the U.S. population.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention includes availability of those holding the IBCLC credential at hospitals with delivery services as a measure of adequacy of breastfeeding support in the State specific “Breastfeeding Report Card,” issued annually. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act also contains key provisions for breastfeeding support: Unpaid break time at work for nursing mothers, and preventive services for women (with no cost sharing) covering comprehensive lactation support and counseling by a trained provider, and costs for renting breastfeeding equipment.

### **A Rigorous Process of Certification.**

Becoming an IBCLC is a rigorous process including: 1) general education in the health sciences field, 2) 300-1000 hours of lactation- specific clinical practice, 3) 90 hours of education concentrating on human lactation and breastfeeding, and 4) passing an objective exam. Three separate pathways enable applicants to qualify for the certification exam. Pathways involve either experience in lactation as a clinician, a graduate of an academic program, or completion of an apprenticeship in human lactation and breastfeeding. The IBCLC credential is time-limited and certificants must demonstrate continued expertise in breastfeeding via recertification by continuing education every 5 years and examination every 10 years.

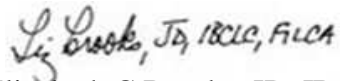
The international certification and rigorous professional standards of the IBCLC demonstrate specialized knowledge and skill in breastfeeding and lactation. They are the defining characteristics that make the IBCLC the gold standard in lactation care.

IBLCE, ILCA and LEAARC call on medical and professional organizations, governments, health care administrators, and public health agencies to include IBCLCs as part of a comprehensive team for supporting breastfeeding families.

Very Truly Yours,



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