

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; September 1, 2007 -

PUBLIC PROTESTS APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANTS NATIONWIDE

Breastfeeding supporters will gather on Saturday, September 8, 2007, at 12:00pm at Applebee's Restaurants across the country to protest the treatment of Brooke Ryan and her 7 month old child.

Allegedly, on June 14th, while Ms. Ryan was breastfeeding her baby discreetly in a corner booth during an anniversary dinner with her family, an Applebee's Manager asked her to cover her baby with a blanket. Ms. Ryan responded by citing the Kentucky law that states that "no person shall interfere with a woman breastfeeding her child". Ms. Ryan then produced a copy of the statute that she had received from the Kentucky Health Department, an organization that encourages women to keep a copy with them for situations such as the one she was experiencing. The manager, after reviewing a copy of the statute continued to insist that she had to "cover the baby with a blanket" if she wanted to breastfeed there, and that nursing her child was "indecent". The family left the restaurant before being served their meal, Ms. Ryan and baby in tears.

Shortly following the incident, Ms. Ryan retained the services of a lawyer who contacted Thomas and King, the company that owns and operates the Lexington Applebee's location. Nearly 2 months later, the company responded with a letter stating "we are considering keeping blankets in the restaurants for use by breastfeeding mothers that may not have them readily available," with the intent that mothers will be forced to put them over their babies.

Breastfeeding supporters have decided to conduct a public protest at the store location, as well as locations nationwide. It will occur on Saturday, September 8, 2007, at noon. When Senator Tom Buford, (Rep., KY), who spearheaded the passage of the Kentucky public breastfeeding law was told of the planned protest at the store in Lexington, KY, he said, "Let me know the date and I will come by and support you", and also made a suggestion of an appropriate sign for the event: "small children are not allowed to eat in this restaurant."

Even though there is a patchwork of strong and weak state laws aimed at protecting a woman's right to nurse her baby, the mistreatment Ms. Ryan encountered is far too common. Most women who nurse their babies will at some time be forced to feel the shameful sting of discrimination. Usually this burden is carried by a woman in secrecy, due to fear of further anguish to her family. Some women choose to bring their stories to the public in an effort to educate and bring about a positive change. Earlier this year, a Pennsylvania woman was threatened with arrest if she did not stop breastfeeding her child at her local mall. Last November, a mother in Vermont was kicked off of a Delta flight for not covering up while breastfeeding her child. The Delta incident resulted in over 800 participants protesting the discrimination by conducting "nurse-ins" at Delta counters in over 40 cities across the US.

"Because most public breastfeeding laws do not provide a clear remedy for women who are harassed or discriminated against," said Salem Hamilton, Executive Director of Birth Without Boundaries, International, "we are asking for breastfeeding supporters across the country to encourage their legislators to add enforcement provisions to their state's laws that would provide the protection women and babies need".

On Wednesday, August 31, 2007, the official corporate response as given by Mr. Alex Bressette, Applebee's corporate office's International Guest Relations Manager, is as follows: "Applebee's and its franchisees love having families dine together at our restaurants. We believe that this franchisee made a reasonable and lawful request of this guest in order to promote a pleasant and comfortable experience for all of its guests."

In the spirit of the existing diversity and inclusion policy published by Applebee's Restaurants, Birth Without Boundaries, Intl. is asking the corporation to adopt and implement an official breastfeeding friendly policy.

As a breastfeeding mother, Ms. Ryan is doing the best for her child by giving him the optimum nutrition possible. According to UNICEF, if infants worldwide were fed only mother's milk for their first six months, at least 1.3 million lives a year would be saved.

The September 8, 2007 event is sponsored by Birth Without Boundaries, International; a Pennsylvania based non profit organization committed to eliminating restrictions placed on birthing mothers and their babies.

Inquiries may be directed to Salem Hamilton, 717.379.8804, or to birthwithoutboundaries.com

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