

February 11, 2016

Representative Helen Head – Chair  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT. 05633-5301

Representative Thomas Stevens – V. Chair  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT. 05633-5301

**RE: Testimony, House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs  
H. 808, An Act Relating to Accommodations for Pregnant Employees**

Submitted by: Erin E. Jones, March of Dimes, Regional Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs

On behalf of the March of Dimes Vermont Chapter, I write to express our support for **H.808, *An Act relating to accommodations for pregnant employees*** which would prohibit employment discrimination and ensure reasonable workplace accommodations for workers who are limited in their ability to perform their jobs due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants, and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. Today, large majorities of women are remaining in the workforce while pregnant and returning to work after having their babies. To protect the health of their pregnancies, some women may be required to take certain precautions in the workplace. For instance, pregnant women should wear gloves or a mask if handling chemicals, they should not lift heavy objects, and they should rest periodically if they stand for long periods of time. For women who return to work after having a child, employers should create a supportive environment for mothers to successfully combine work with breastfeeding.

While the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related health conditions, H.808 would ensure reasonable accommodations are provided to employees to enable them to continue working despite limitations due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. The law is designed to ensure that these accommodations would not present an undue hardship on the employer. Examples might include providing an employee with a chair, providing assistance with heavy lifting, offering uncompensated break time, or providing temporary job restructuring. The bill will make it unlawful to refuse an employee or prospective employee's request for reasonable accommodations, it would prohibit denying employment opportunities based on the need for a reasonable accommodation, and it would prohibit an employee from being required to take leave if reasonable accommodations can be provided.

As an organization focused on helping women have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies, the Vermont chapter of the March of Dimes asks for your support of H.808. This bill will protect both the health of women's pregnancies and their financial stability by ensuring they can obtain reasonable accommodations in the workplace