

# **‘It’s really in your face’: Some Utah lawmakers uncomfortable with bill making it clear that women can legally breast-feed in public**

<https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2018/01/23/bill-seeks-to-clearly-allow-breastfeeding-in-public/>

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By Lee Davidson

Despite concerns that it might allow immodest behavior, a bill advanced on a close vote Thursday to make it crystal clear that breast-feeding is legal in public places.

The House Business and Labor Committee voted 6-5 for HB196, and sent it to the full House.

“I don’t feel that we should ever relegate a woman to a restroom to breast-feed her child,” said Rep. Justin Fawson, R-North Ogden, sponsor of the bill. But he and others said some businesses now ask women to go there.

“It is an issue here in Utah. Women are asked to move, cover up or leave the establishment while breast-feeding,” said Stephanie Pitcher with the Utah Women’s Coalition. “We are one of only two states that does not protect breast-feeding in business establishments.”

But some worried that the bill is a license to immodesty. It says, “A woman may breast-feed in any place of public accommodation ... irrespective of whether the woman’s breast is uncovered during or incidental to the breast-feeding.”

“This seems to say you don’t have to cover up at all,” said Rep. Curt Webb, R-Logan. “I’m not comfortable with that, I’m just not. It’s really in your face.”

When Fawson was asked if he would consider changes in his bill to require some modesty, he said no — and explained that would change definitions and requirements that have been in Utah law without problem for decades.

“In the 23 years that it has been law, we haven’t heard of widespread pornographic feeding frenzies, if you will, of mothers being overly exposed,” he said.

Samantha Smith, an attorney who is breast-feeding a baby, said, “I understand that maybe [for] some members of this community, a woman’s breast bothers you. That’s your perspective.... Women grow breasts the same way men grow beards. If beards don’t bother you, breasts should not bother you.”

Of note, the committee has only one woman member — Rep. Susan Duckworth, D-Magna. She made the motion to pass the bill.

Utah is known as a family-friendly state with [high birth rates and big families](#). But it’s not so friendly when it comes to legally allowing mothers to breast-feed in public.

“There are 48 states that have this legislation in place today” to clearly allow public breast-feeding, says Rep. Justin Fawson, R-North Ogden. “Utah is one of the two that does not.”

So his [HB196](#), formally introduced on Tuesday, seeks to change that.

“I guess it’s surprising to me that we don’t have something like this in place, that we would tell mothers there are places you can’t breast-feed,” Fawson said, adding some constituents and stakeholders asked him to push the bill.

His bill says, “A woman may breast-feed in any place of public accommodation ... irrespective of whether the woman’s breast is uncovered during or incidental to the breast-feeding.”

Fawson said Utah law already exempts breast-feeding from indecency laws, as 18 other states also do.

He said Utah has also taken some other steps to protect moms, including being one of 28 states that provide some protection for breast-feeding mothers in the workplace and one of 17 that exempt them from jury duty.

Given the health benefits of breast-feeding, he said it’s finally time to clearly allow it in public and make it easier for mothers.