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**Citizen Oversight Board Recommends the Denver Sheriff Department Allow Nursing Mothers to Provide Breast Milk to Their Infants**

Denver, CO—The Citizen Oversight Board (COB) provided recommendations to the Denver Sheriff Department (DSD) that nursing mothers be allowed to provide breast milk to their babies while incarcerated. Concerns regarding the treatment of nursing mothers were raised with the board at a recent public forum. Currently, nursing mothers in Denver jails can maintain their milk supply while in custody via the use of breast pumps. They may not breastfeed directly or store and transport their milk to a caregiver.

Sudden weaning, which can result from a mother’s incarceration, can be physically and emotionally traumatic for mothers and infants. Research indicates that breastfeeding boosts infant immunity and contributes to better overall health and well-being for babies. There are numerous health benefits for mothers, including reduced risk of infections, ovarian cancer, and breast cancer. Furthermore, breastfeeding can promote stronger bonds between a mother and baby—which may be seriously jeopardized when a mother is incarcerated. Jail systems around the country already provide methods for breastfeeding or transporting milk.

“While we acknowledge the efforts of the DSD to address this issue, we also recognize that more can and should be done if the current system results in flushing milk down the drain when there are babies that need to be fed. We look forward to working with the Sheriff on a policy that takes into account the needs of the child and the mother,” said Katina Banks, Chair of the Citizen Oversight Board.

The current “pump and dump” policy employed in Denver jails is described by the Denver Sheriff Department as “temporary in nature.” The City Charter authorizes the Citizen Oversight Board to make policy-level recommendations to the safety departments about issues of concern. The COB recommended, in a public letter to the Sheriff, that a final policy be developed in a timely fashion that would permit mothers to provide milk to their babies through breastfeeding or storage and transport. The full text of the letter is available on the COB website at [www.denvergov.org/COB](http://www.denvergov.org/COB).

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