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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Mary Lawlor (917) 453-6780; [ExecutiveDirector@nacpm.org](mailto:ExecutiveDirector@nacpm.org)

**In response to the opposition of U.S. delegates to a breastfeeding resolution introduced at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2018, the National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM) has issued the following statement:**

NACPM wishes to express, along with others in the international and public health communities, our shock and profound dismay about U.S. opposition to a resolution introduced at the United Nations-affiliated World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2018 to encourage countries to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding worldwide.



The resolution spoke to the many health benefits of breastfeeding for both parents and infants, included strategies for member nations to support those who want to breastfeed, and was expected to be quickly approved. According to recent news reports, U.S. delegates objected to the language in the resolution, stating that it would limit access to formula internationally. As reported in the [New York Times](#) on July 8, Ecuador had planned to introduce the measure, but threats from U.S. officials to impose trade sanctions and withdraw crucial military aid forced the Ecuadorean government to drop the

resolution: "Health advocates scrambled to find another sponsor for the resolution, but at least a dozen countries, most of them poor nations in Africa and Latin America, backed off, citing fears of retaliation." In the end, Russia sponsored the resolution, which was adopted with few changes and without opposition from the U.S.

Given the differential impact that the increasingly aggressive marketing behavior of the \$70 billion formula industry has had on infant health outcomes, it is unconscionable that the U.S. would abuse its power so blatantly and place corporate interests above global public health. There is high quality evidence that infants in low-resource countries who are not exclusively breastfed are at increased risk of death from diarrhea, pneumonia, and neonatal sepsis. For this reason, the [World Health Organization](#) has a longstanding policy of encouraging breastfeeding. In the U.S., poor communities of color are also disproportionately targeted by formula companies, one of many contributors to the health disparities experienced in these communities.

NACPM strongly supports efforts to educate the public and all health care providers about the importance of breastfeeding. Parents, of course, have the right to make their own best choices for the nutrition of their babies, and there are circumstances in which formula feeding is necessary. However, research over the past several decades has consistently demonstrated that breastfeeding is the optimal method of infant feeding, conferring numerous health benefits, including: decreased incidence of infectious morbidity and a lower risk of childhood obesity, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, leukemia, and sudden infant death syndrome. For mothers, breastfeeding is associated with a lower incidence of premenopausal breast cancer, ovarian cancer, retained gestational weight gain, type 2 diabetes, myocardial infarction, and metabolic syndrome. Additionally, breastfeeding plays a critical role in promoting bonding between parents and their babies.

**NACPM**

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the way we are born*

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