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For immediate release

Morrisville, NC-January 20 marks the anniversary of Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin's historic Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding. Dr. Benjamin challenged all Americans to do their part to remove barriers to breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is a key to primary prevention in public health, playing a role in preventing many infections, as well as serious non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, coronary artery disease and some cancers. While breastfeeding is important to the health of both mothers and children, American mothers who breastfeed face significant obstacles. Skeptical family members and a cultural norm that favors formula-feeding, outdated hospital practices and uninformed health care providers, inflexible workplaces and lack of protective policies conspire to make the road to breastfeeding success a bumpy and uncomfortable ride.

Dr. Benjamin's *Call to Action* elevated discussion of breastfeeding to a topic of national importance. A major study published in the journal *Pediatrics* estimated that the United States would save \$13 billion per year in health care and other costs if 90% of infants were exclusively breastfed for six months. Additionally, employers enjoy a significant return on investment for the dollars spent providing accommodations for nursing mothers such as private spaces and break times for mothers to express milk. Employers with robust lactation programs are rewarded with increased employee retention and satisfaction and fewer sick days taken as their employee's children are generally sick less frequently than those who are formula-fed.

As a new year begins, the United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) encourages each and every resident to consider how they can support breastfeeding. It could be by encouraging a pregnant family member to learn about breastfeeding, asking lawmakers to vote for protective policies, providing

space for a nursing mothers' group, graciously covering during a colleague's nursing break, or just making a nursing mother feel comfortable and welcome wherever she may be.

The Surgeon General identified 20 evidence-based actions, including ensuring access to services provided by International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs). IBCLCs work with employers to provide guidance and technical assistance as they establish workplace lactation programs. They advocate for policies to protect and support breastfeeding families at the local, state and national levels. IBCLCs work directly with new mothers, helping them to enjoy the satisfaction of reaching their own goals. States USLCA President Laurie Beck, "IBCLCs support the *mother's* goals. We work with the entire health care team and in our communities to be sure that mothers have an easier time with breastfeeding."

IBCLCs are health care professionals who specialize in, and are credentialed in, lactation management. More than 11,000 IBCLCs are available nationwide, working in hospitals, community-based clinics, government agencies, and private practice.

For more information about the Surgeon General's Call to Action, visit <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/breastfeeding/>. For more information about IBCLCs or to find an IBCLC in your area, visit www.uslca.org.