

April 19, 2017

## Trump's Trade Agency Attacks Other Countries' Efforts to Promote and Protect Breastfeeding in New Report

On March 31, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) released the [National Trade Estimate](#) report. This is a statutorily-required annual review of U.S. trade partners' "significant trade barriers" that the U.S. government seeks to have eliminated.

The 492-page report provides excellent insight into the growing global backlash against our current "trade" policies. While President Donald Trump has flip-flopped on his pledges to reverse the gigantic job-killing trade deficit with China, this U.S. government report labels as illegal trade barriers an array of public interest policies, including – shamefully – other governments' policies to promote breastfeeding. Despite substantial progress in reducing infant mortality around the world in recent decades, nearly seven million children under the age of five still die each year – about half of them newborns. [Studies](#) show that breastfeeding has the potential to save 800,000 children under the age of five every single year.

According to the [United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF), "breastfeeding is the foundation of good nutrition and protects children against disease." But only [43 percent of infants](#) (0-5 months) in the world are exclusively breastfed, and this number is even lower in parts of Latin America, Africa and Europe.

For decades, infant formula manufacturers have been accused of aggressive marketing campaigns in developing countries to discourage breastfeeding and instead, to push new mothers into purchasing formula. The famous [boycott of Nestlé](#) in the 1970s led to the development and adoption by nations worldwide of the UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) [International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#) (The Code) in 1981. The Code sets guidelines and restrictions on the marketing of breastmilk substitutes, and reaffirms governments' sovereign rights to take the actions necessary to implement and monitor these guidelines.

To promote and protect the practice of breastfeeding, many countries have implemented policies that restrict corporate marketing strategies targeting mothers. These policies have led to [increased breastfeeding](#) in many countries even though greater progress is still needed.

Rather than embracing these efforts to safeguard the world's most vulnerable inhabitants, the Trump administration, in its March 31 report, indicted the policies as "trade barriers" that should be eliminated:

- Hong Kong: The Report criticizes a [Hong Kong draft code](#), designed to "protect breastfeeding and contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants and young children." USTR labels the policy as a technical barrier to trade due to its potential to reduce sales of "food products for infants and young children."
- Indonesia: USTR labels a draft regulation in Indonesia that would prohibit the "advertising or promotion of milk products for children up to two years of age" as a technical barrier to trade.
- Malaysia: USTR questions Malaysia's proposed revisions to "its existing Code of Ethics for the Marketing of Infant Foods and Related Products" that would restrict corporate marketing practices aimed at toddlers and young children.
- Thailand: The report critiques Thailand for introducing a new regulation that would impose penalties on corporations that violate domestic laws restricting the "promotional, and marketing activities for modified milk for infants, follow-up formula for infants and young children, and supplemental foods for infants."

Seriously? Why not also label popular public health policies aimed at reducing medicine prices as trade barriers too? Oh, actually, that is also a feature of the report.

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This is terrible. The Trump administration wants to support its large, multinational companies to have unfettered, unrestricted marketing of its infant formula products, with their predatory and manipulative practices, in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and in Hong Kong? U.S. citizens must rise up and put a stop to this and support these countries to protect their citizens from the excesses of a country that puts commerce ahead of the

health of women and babies.

Posted by: [Jodine Chase](#) | [April 23, 2017 at 09:58 AM](#)



Unbelievable! These people will stop at nothing.

Posted by: [harriet heywood](#) | [April 23, 2017 at 10:54 PM](#)



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This is putting profits before health, and is going on since the Code was adopted at World Health Assembly and USA did not vote at that time with the same objectives. If USA was to be serious about health of its citizens, it would have stopped aggressive marketing to its own people that has been shown to be detrimental to the health of babies and huge economic burden as well. How can one expect that USA would be worried for health of children of other Nations. There is a need to boycott US trade in my view if you wanted to stop this effort of creating "trade barriers" ultimately harming human health.

Posted by: [arun Gupta](#) | [April 24, 2017 at 12:48 AM](#)



This is a shocking approach to health care from our current president and his administration. Thank you, Dr. Arun Gupta, for your statement on this - - of course I fully agree.

Posted by: [Debra Swank](#) | [April 24, 2017 at 02:07 AM](#)



Could President Trump be acting out of his ignorance about breastfeeding and the benefits to these babies and the harm not breastfeeding will do to these same babies? My initial thoughts are he needs to be educated!


Posted by: [Debra Knight](#) | [April 24, 2017 at 06:52 AM](#)

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