

retailers, restaurants and health care providers—argued before its passage that it would be “quite burdensome for employers” and expose them to “potential litigation traps.” They said AB 1976 already had required costly changes regarding lactation.

Proponents of the new law cite research from the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee showing that more than half of mothers return to the workforce before their children are 1 year old. In California, half of mothers work during pregnancy, and most of them say they plan to return to work while they are still breastfeeding, according to the state’s Center for Family Health (CFH).

And barriers at work, the proponents say, can cause those women to stop breastfeeding before their child is 6 months old.

**Data from the California Department of Public Health** shows a large disparity in access to breastfeeding support among California’s working mothers, breaking down along racial, ethnic and economic lines.

Wealthier white women reported receiving the most lactation support from their employers, while black and Latina mothers reported the least support. And women at or below the poverty line were far less likely than others to work for employers who accommodated their

#### About this story:

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lactation needs.

Still, the CFH reports that since 2011 the percentage of all women who reported receiving workplace breastfeeding support increased from just over half to two-thirds.

Carissa Rosenthal, 32, recently returned to her job in public relations after giving birth to a baby boy 3 1/2 months ago.

Her co-working office in San Diego has a “mothers’ lounge” with a door that locks, a comfortable chair, a shelf, a lamp, a fridge and a sink down the hall in the kitchen, she said.

“It’s definitely a perk and a selling point for a shared office,” Rosenthal said over the phone while pumping in the room one recent Thursday afternoon. “I definitely feel it’s an important thing for it to be comfortable, and not just stuffed into a janitor’s closet.”

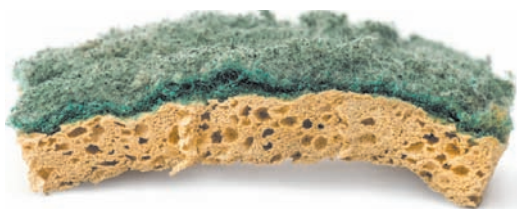
Woody, who is pregnant again, said she wasn’t aware of the new requirements under SB 142, but the potential lactation accommodations in her new workplace seem a little better than at the last one.

“There’s a changing room, so I’ll probably be able to pump in there,” she said. □

## WEEKLY DOSE

### What’s the deal with germs?

Did you know that your kitchen sink harbors more fecal bacteria than your



toilet after it’s been flushed? And, brace yourself, a toilet can spread bacteria up to 6 feet when you flush with the lid up. Microbes are everywhere and exposure keeps our immune systems strong, but there are some bad ones out there. According to “Dr. Germ” (Charles Gerba, professor of public health, environmental science and immunology at the University of Arizona), the kitchen is actually one of the germiest spots in a home because bathrooms are cleaned more frequently. Sinks and cutting boards carry loads of harmful bacteria and should be washed regularly with bleach. Sponges need to be changed once a week, your fridge handles and hand towels must be cleaned continually, and don’t forget to flush out the water reservoir for your coffee pot—it is one of the top five germiest places in the kitchen!

Source: *Applied and Environmental Microbiology and the National Sanitation Foundation*

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