

Kathy Metzger
209 Mt. Oak Place
Annapolis, MD 21409

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am Kathy Metzger from District 3. Thank you, Delegate Dana Jones, for introducing House Bill 711. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a voice for communities that are desperately in need of our help. Last spring when covid hit the service industry so severely, many workers lost their jobs, especially in the Hispanic communities. Last April, with the help of Downtown Hope Church and Feed Anne Arundel, we started a Pop Up Pantry at a local elementary school to provide food, hygiene items and baby goods for these families. Their need was, and still is, immediate. Their money doesn't stretch far enough to pay the rent, keep food on the table and babies in dry diapers. Over the summer months, we surveyed our families and found that the top two reasons they came to us were for fresh food and diapers. Just this past Saturday we crossed over the mark of serving over 50,000 individuals. (And that's just at one pantry! There are many others in our county doing the same thing.) So many people have come alongside of us to donate, month after month. Yet there is one thing that we worry about: donor fatigue. People have given time and resources again and again, but there is no end in sight. We are scrounging up donations week after week. That's why we need to incentivize those who are giving generously to keep the donations coming in.

So why incentivize these items? The food banks are doing a good job of getting the food items that families need. However, what seems like a "given" to many of us as necessities, are items that come at a huge cost to a low or no income family. One volunteer asked me why we don't just give cloth diapers that would be more economical. Imagine that you live in an area with one of the highest covid rates. You don't own a washer and dryer. You don't own a car to get to a laundromat. You have young children at home with you and schools have been online. You are just trying to keep food on the table. Now imagine that you have a teenage daughter who is afraid to leave the house because she doesn't have the feminine hygiene products that she needs. Since you don't have a car, you need to walk to a store to get what is needed and there is limited access to public transportation to a low cost store. Having a pantry that gives you these personal hygiene items meets a huge need! These items protect the health of our women and children.

Over the past ten months, we have given away countless feminine hygiene items and over 230,000 diapers. We are just one of several pantries serving our Annapolis community. Now think of the needs of our county, and every county in Maryland, and we have a huge need. This isn't going away anytime soon. We have to find ways to help individuals and corporations give generously to meet these needs. This tax incentive is a way to do so. Let's do what we can to get these items into the hands of every woman and child in need of our help. We can do this with your help.

I ask you for a favorable report on this bill. Thank you for this opportunity to speak, for those who don't have the opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Metzger