



**Testimony for Ways and Means Committee in Support of
House Bill 282 for Hearing on February 2, 2022**

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

January 26, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary,

I write to ask you to support HB282 introduced by Delegate Dana Jones this session to exempt diapers from sales tax. Diapers are a basic need and are critical to the health of the children who wear them, and to the financial and emotional health of the families that care for those children.

My name is Corinne Cannon. I am a mother of three and the founder and executive director of the Greater DC Diaper Bank. Our mission is to strengthen and empower families and individuals in need throughout the DC region by providing an adequate and reliable source for basic baby needs and personal hygiene products. The Diaper Bank serves on average 5,600 families each month and over 26,000 families each year across Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia. Last year we distributed just over 9.5 million diapers and over \$557,000 of other essential hygiene products (or 4.5 million diapers and \$281,336 of essential hygiene products, respectively, in Maryland alone). Though this is expansive, it is not nearly enough to end diaper need for the 31.1% of Maryland babies living in low-income or poor families (MD State of Babies Yearbook 2021), especially as the pandemic creates economic insecurity for more families.

Providing diapers for your baby is not a choice – though we see too many families who are faced every month with the question of buying diapers or other essential basic items. We asked our families this very question and 88% told us that they had to make a choice between buying diapers and spending money on food, rent, utilities, transportation, and clothing for their families.

The impact of these decisions is felt by everyone in the family. If a family runs short of diapers and cannot change their baby as frequently as they would like, we know that can lead to health issues like diaper rash and urinary tract infections, not to mention that babies who are in wet diapers cry more and can be more irritable, which adds to the stress of being a parent. For parents, not having enough diapers is a huge stressor. We asked parents about the impact of diaper need on their own emotional health and they overwhelmingly told us that when they don't have enough diapers they feel stressed, anxious, sad, and like a bad parent. Research conducted through Yale University found a correlation between diaper need and maternal depression. As you likely know, untreated maternal depression leads to a host of bad outcomes for mothers and their children – including poor school readiness and involvement with the child welfare system.



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I am very proud of our work in Maryland and throughout the DC region to help families parenting in poverty, but the need is far greater than our reach. An adequate supply of diapers costs more than \$100 per month for most of our families – about 50 diapers a week or 200 each month. Eliminating the sales tax will allow parents to buy 12 more diapers than they would have been able to otherwise. In an industry study of diaper need, researchers learned from mothers that they most often fell about 10 to 13 diapers short per week, so being able to buy 12 additional diapers each month will reduce a family's average shortfall.

Doing away with the sales tax on diapers will not lift families out of poverty, but we know it will provide relief – both financial and emotional. We asked our families specifically what receiving extra diapers does for their families each month (most families get 50 diapers per baby each month from the Diaper Bank), and they told us that this small relief allows them to pay a bill, buy food, and save some money. They also told us that it helps them feel less stressed, less frustrated, and like a better parent to have the diapers they need.

Beyond putting more money into the wallets of struggling families, there is a simple question of fairness. We should not tax parents for providing these essential items for their families. What, how, and who we tax speaks volumes about what we value as a community. Please pass this bill and let us value the health of our babies, caregivers, and families. House Bill 282 will help diapers be more affordable and available and is an important step in ending diaper need in Maryland. Please support this important piece of legislation. Thank you.

Yours,

Corinne Cannon
Executive Director and Founder
Greater DC Diaper Bank