

Testimony Regarding

The Governor's FY 2022-2023 Proposed Budget

March 3, 2021

Good Morning Chair Osten, Chair Walker, and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Kohl, I'm a resident of Waterford, CT, and a graduate student intern at The Diaper Bank of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Governor's budget proposal. A significant reduction in funding for The Diaper Bank was specified, however; this comes at a point where the need for The Diaper Bank's services is at an all-time high. I urge the appropriations committee to oppose this reduction and keep The Diaper Bank's funding intact.

As a second-year MSW student at the UConn School of Social Work, I began my internship with The Diaper Bank at the start of the 2020 Fall Semester. I have had the unique opportunity to work and learn within this organization amidst a global pandemic. While many of our lives came to a halt last year, The Diaper Bank has been working nonstop to address the ever-growing need for diapers among Connecticut families. Prior to the pandemic, one in three families experienced diaper need¹. This number, however, is increasing due to the economic impact of the current public health crisis.

Diaper need itself is a public health issue. Now more than ever, caregivers who are low income or financially struggling are forced to choose between diapers for their child and other essential items, such as rent or groceries. Research shows that when families are unable to afford an adequate supply of diapers, the health of the baby and the caregiver are at risk. Babies are significantly more likely to experience urinary tract infections, severe diaper rash, and other negative health outcomes, while caregivers are more likely to experience mental health need².

This gap in resources has never been more obvious and since the beginning of the pandemic, the Diaper Bank increased programming to address the growing need. In partnership with over 50 community based organizations statewide, The Diaper Bank has distributed over 1.6 million diapers in the past year alone. Even with these expanded services, The Diaper Bank is only beginning to scratch the surface of need. The Governor's budget, however, proposes that The Diaper Bank's current state funding of \$330,000 be reduced by nearly half.

¹ The Nation Diaper Bank Network. (2020). What is Diaper Need? From <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/diaper-need/>

² Austin, A. E., & Smith, M. V. (2017). Examining Material Hardship in Mothers: Associations of Diaper Need and Food Insufficiency with Maternal Depressive Symptoms. *Health equity*, 1(1), 127–133. <https://doi.org/10.1089/heq.2016.0023>

Reducing funds at a moment where these services are most needed would be irresponsible and directly affect Connecticut's families access to diapers. This work is critical and cannot be done without proper funding. I urge you all to support increasing the funding allocated to The Diaper Bank of Connecticut because Connecticut families should not have to choose between the health of their child and a roof over their head.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jennifer Kohl

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