

TESTIMONY OF JAMES MACIEL-ANDREWS

Appropriations Committee

March 3, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is James Maciel-Andrews, I live in New Haven, and I am a Senior at Engineering and Science University Magnet School, and a donor/supporter of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, which serves families throughout the state. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning regarding my support for restoring funding for The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, which will allow the organization to continue the critical work of providing basic human needs to Connecticut's most vulnerable families.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, diaper need impacted over 35,000 infants and toddlers in our state. The state's allocation of \$333,333 equates to the cost of a supplemental supply of diapers covering 7% of the need that existed in our state. We know the need for diapers has only grown since then and we need support to continue to meet it.

As a staff member, donor and supporter of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, I know that diapers are a basic human need for every baby and toddler. Diapers are vital to the physical, emotional, and economic well-being of children and their families. Prior to the pandemic, one in three Connecticut families struggled to afford an adequate supply of diapers; *now the need is at an all-time high.*

With restored funding, The Diaper Bank will be able to continue to provide diapers to Connecticut's most vulnerable at a time when they are critically needed to individuals who are low income or financially struggling.

In my 8 years of work (and 10 years of donating, supporting and volunteering) at The Diaper Bank, I have spent most of my community service hours at The Diaper Bank, helping repack diapers and moving pallets during school breaks or the monthly volunteer days. Occasionally, I would help deliver orders to other agencies, who would in turn distribute these orders to families in need. While The Diaper Bank doesn't provide diapers directly to families, it distributes millions of diapers annually to poor and low-income families through its extensive Diaper Distribution Network of more than 50 partner agencies throughout the state. I would always get to see the impact of our work when I went out on deliveries. With every stop along our delivery routes, I would be welcomed with grateful smiles, reminding me how important those diapers would be for families in need. Thus, I have been able to witness the crucial importance of our mission, and the difference that our work makes for poor and low-income families across the state. During the process of conducting the *Social & Economic Impacts of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut* survey in 2016, I visited several of our Diaper Distribution Network partner agencies to meet with families in diaper need, and was able to confirm what we already knew regarding the health risks that infants and toddlers go through without enough diapers each day, such as skin infections, open sores, urinary tract infections, and other conditions that may require medical attention. Furthermore, parents unable to diaper their children are more likely to suffer from parental depression. Even prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, we received numerous calls, emails and social media messages from families struggling to afford enough diapers to keep their children clean, dry, and healthy. Now due to the pandemic, record levels of unemployment combined with cuts in paid hours for workers across almost every economic sector in the country have led to an extraordinary strain on the philanthropic community, which cannot sustain this level of demand for resources. The current state funding has been critical in helping to meet at least a portion of the increased need.

Diapers, period products, and senior incontinence products are basic human needs that are required for the health and well-being of families. I urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to support restoring state funding for The Diaper Bank of Connecticut because all Connecticut families deserve access to these basic human needs, and we can ensure these families are supported, “from the bottom up.”

Yours,

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