

## **Testimony is Support of Allocating State Funds to The Diaper Bank of Connecticut**

### **Natasha Rivera-LaButhie**

My name is Natasha Rivera-LaButhie. I am a hard-working mother of four who knows first-hand what a lifeline The Diaper Bank of Connecticut provides to families in our state.

When I anticipated becoming a first-time mother in 2007, I didn't expect to experience diaper need. When I got pregnant, my husband and I were surprised to learn we were having more than one baby. While we were happy, this now meant we needed to afford diapers for two daughters, on top of all our other necessities. We knew this would be a strain, even with both of us working full-time.

Then, as my due date neared, I was hospitalized for what ended up being more than 70 days leading up to the births of our daughters. After they were born, they were treated in the NICU for 30 days, which prevented me even longer from returning to work. And one of our daughters required costly, specialized formula for health reasons, which added another financial burden.

During this time, from late May until the fall of 2007, we had one source of income. It was just my husband working, and our rent alone was \$1,200, not including utilities. We worried about having to choose between affording the life-sustaining formula our daughter needed and affording diapers. This shouldn't be a choice any parent has to make.

Once I went back to work, we couldn't afford to send our newborn daughters to daycare at such a young age, so family members traveled from other states to provide childcare. With help, we made it work, but it was a struggle.

The Diaper Bank is the only reason I was eventually able to send my kids to daycare. I couldn't afford diapers for two kids; I had to have diapers for daycare and diapers for them for the house. If I didn't have diapers for daycare, they wouldn't take my kids. If they wouldn't take my kids, I couldn't work. Then I'd be on TANF, SNAP or other assistance programs.

There are many other families like ours out there. We didn't anticipate needing help. I was working full-time, and so was my husband. I was a working mom, I went to school, I did my due diligence, I paid my taxes, I was a functioning member of society - I just needed help.

Because we didn't meet income eligibility requirements, SNAP and TANF weren't available to me and my husband. The Diaper Bank was the only place we could turn for help, and they welcomed us without hesitation. This was the only service I used that was not stigmatizing me. It's great to have a service that, no matter what end of the spectrum you're on, you can benefit from it and it's useful and it's not stigmatized.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut is a service that provides help to families. This is not something that people depend on for a very long time; they only use it when they really need it. If there was

a month I didn't need diapers, I didn't go to pick them up so someone else who needed them got them. We're not abusing this service, we just need this extra help for a little while.

The Diaper Bank provides diapers, which in turn allow us parents to utilize funds for other necessities - so we don't have to turn to public assistance programs. We're less likely to use TANF or SNAP benefits because we're able to reallocate those dollars we would have spent on diapers to other things. We're using it to cover rent, we're using it for groceries; the money The Diaper Bank saves us is eventually going back to the state in a positive way.

I will forever be grateful to the nursing coordinator at the hospital where my daughters were born who told me about The Diaper Bank. And I am grateful to The Diaper Bank for helping me, no questions asked, twice - back in 2007, and then three years later when we again needed short-term help following the birth of our son.

My experience with The Diaper Bank inspired me to advocate on its behalf - to you today, as well as to the broader community. I have referred many other moms I know, who just need a little help, to The Diaper Bank. And in 2019 I joined the organization's Board of Directors, where I proudly help govern and spread awareness of its impactful work. The Diaper Bank inspired me to be a better person.

There are many other moms out there just like me. I'm a working mom, I always have been, and my kids are all honor students. Things happen - to everyone. Everyone struggles sometimes. Don't make people feel bad when things happen. It's about help. People need help. Give them the help they're asking for.

I urge you to help by allocating funds to The Diaper Bank of Connecticut so it can continue its critical mission of getting diapers and other basic health needs to families who really need them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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