

TESTIMONY OF JANET STOLFI ALFANO, MSW
Committee on Children
February 17, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Janet Stolfi Alfano, and I am the Executive Director of The Diaper Bank. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you this afternoon.

Please support **HB 6595, AN ACT EXEMPTING BABY DIAPERS FROM THE SALES TAX;** this bill would include baby diapers as exempt from the sales tax in Connecticut. Adult diapers are already tax exempt in Connecticut as a basic health need. I contend that diapers for babies constitute a basic health need as well. Currently, baby diapers are classified as clothing. This distinction is significant and incorrect. An adequate supply of diapers for either babies or adults serves the same purpose: to keep the wearer dry and healthy and to hinder the spread of potentially contagious diseases, especially in group settings like child care centers or long term care facilities.

The main objective of The Diaper Bank is keeping babies clean, dry and healthy. By providing diapers, we can reduce the incidences of preventable diseases in children such as: diaper dermatitis, herpes and staphylococci, hepatitis. We can also prevent urinary tract infections in children that can lead to jaundice, fever, loss of appetite, vomiting and renal failure. Providing diapers improves health outcomes in young children.

According to the Journal Pediatrics (2013), lack of access to diapers was one of the primary stressors for moms reporting that "...an adequate supply of diapers may prove a tangible way of reducing parenting stress, a critical factor influencing child health and development."

Running out of diapers can also be the catalyst for child abuse. Constant crying of a baby can drain a parent - mentally and emotionally. Stress can lead to lapse in judgment and result in physical abuse.

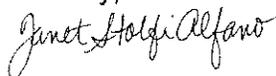
- In low-income households, babies often spend the entire day or longer in a single diaper. Inadequate diaper changing increases the risk of numerous health problems.
- There are no federal subsidies for diapers. Families cannot use SNAP (foodstamps) or WIC to purchase diapers.
- Most licensed childcare centers require parents to provide a steady supply of diapers and most do not accept cloth diapers. Low-income parents cannot take advantage of free or subsidized care if they cannot afford to provide a supply of diapers. If parents cannot access childcare, then they are less able to attend work or school on a consistent basis. This in turn leads to increased economic instability and a continuation of the cycle of poverty.
- The majority of low-income families do not have affordable access to washing facilities. Many coin-operated laundromats do not allow customers to wash cloth diapers for health and sanitary reasons.

The simple fact is that diapers are a basic need for the health and well-being of children and families. As the Executive Director of The Diaper Bank in North Haven, Connecticut, I can attest to the growing need in this state. Diaper banks like ours and others throughout Connecticut are doing what we can to meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable residents. But the truth is, we can't do it alone.

Eliminating the sales tax on this basic need will provide some needed relief to struggling families. More dollars for families means more diapers and healthier babies. It's as simple as that.

Exempting diapers from sales tax is a good place to start.

Sincerely,



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