

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6473

AN ACT EXPANDING THE DIAPER BANK TO INCLUDE FEMININE HYGIENE

Title: PRODUCTS.

Vote Date: 3/9/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/23/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill provides an unspecified dollar amount to the Diaper Bank of Connecticut to provide feminine hygiene products to women who meet the Diaper Bank's income eligibility standards. This bill intends to provide in-demand essential supplies to an underserved population to promote health and safety.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Deidre Gifford, Commissioner, Department of Social Services supports the intent and goal of this bill. Dr. Gifford notes that if additional funding is made available, the Department is committed to "expanding its current partnership with the Diaper Bank of Connecticut and would provide administrative support to ensure the distribution of any allocated funding."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project

Liz Gustafson, State Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT)

The Connecticut Hospital Association

Joy Ren, Student, Wilton High School

Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance)

Janet Stolfi Alfano, Executive Director, The Diaper Bank of Connecticut

They express support for this bill because it increases accessibility to feminine products, which are essential to the wellbeing of menstruating persons. And so, this bill advances health equity in the state. They all acknowledge that menstrual products are an insurmountable cost for many low-income individuals. The financial fallout from COVID-19 exacerbates this issue. This bill is necessary to ensure that menstruating people do not have to choose between buying feminine hygiene products and paying for other necessities. Additionally, it helps prevent menstruating people from missing out on aspects of daily life, like work and school, because they cannot access these basic needs. All testifiers believe that these products must be provided to ensure the confidence and basic human comfort every menstruator deserves. Ms. Flaherty and Ms. Moore comment on the many health risks associated with lack of access to adequate period products. However, Ms. Moore and Ms. Gustafson urge the committee to amend the bill to include everyone who menstruates, beyond people who identify as a woman. They believe that menstrual products should be available regardless of gender.

Jennifer Kohl, Graduate Student Intern, The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, supports this bill because period poverty is a very prevalent issue in Connecticut. Ms. Kohl encourages the passing of this bill but emphasizes that the Diaper Bank's state funding needs to stay intact to successfully support this expansion. She believes that the Diaper Bank can sustainably address period poverty so long as the governor's budget does not reduce its funding.

Emma Valerio, Member, Mayor's Youth Leadership Council, supports the concept of the bill because the Diaper Bank is "a key access point for period products for those who have to balance multiple competing needs presented by poverty." Ms. Valerio speaks to the importance of ensuring that all female-bodied students have access to tampons and pads in their schools.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Barbara Waterfield opposes this bill because she believes feminine products should be supplied through a woman's charity, rather than through taxpayers. Ms. Waterfield argues that creating more social programs, like this bill proposes, promotes more dependence on the government.

Reported by: Gianna Vollano

Date: March 21, 2021