

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6587

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR DIAPERS.

Vote Date: 3/16/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/21/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee.

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Hubert D. Delany, 144th Dist.

Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.

Rep. Michael D Quinn, 82nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Diapers are a material basic need, like food and shelter, and are essential to the health and economic success of families. Nationally, approximately 30% of families report a need for diapers. One in three families struggles to afford enough diapers to keep their child clean, dry, and healthy. Without enough diapers each day, infants and toddlers are at risk of skin infections, open sores, urinary tract infections, and other conditions that may require medical attention. This bill will not just provide families with diapers, it will provide economic and educational opportunities and better health outcomes.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language changes text requiring Medicaid coverage of diapers to task force studying and making recommendations for diapers and other health-related social needs, including homelessness and food insecurity.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Department of Social Services (DSS), Commissioner, Andrea Barton-Reeves; opposes this bill stating that funding for an expansion of coverage of diapers under Medicaid is not contemplated in the Governor's proposed budget. It is stated the Governor's budget continues to include \$700,000 in annual funding for the provision of diapers to low-income

families, which DSS achieves through a contractual agreement with the Connecticut Diaper Bank.

Office of The Child Advocate, Child Advocate, Sarah Eagan; supports this bill stating this will ensure children's access to basic hygiene support and developmentally appropriate products. It is stated children's health and development will improve as diseases associated with infrequent diaper changes will decrease.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU), Policy Counsel, Jess Zaccagnino; supports this bill stating children deserve to have their basic health needs met without their parents facing economic detriment. It is stated there is a rising price of diapers which will harm low-income Americans. It is suggested expanding Medicaid coverage to include infant and toddler diapers, will drastically improve health, economic and educational outcomes for families across the state.

Brennan Rogers Family Resource Center, Site Coordinator, Lensley Gay; supports this bill stating that parents with little to no funds would benefit families in decreasing the dangers of health issues caused by infrequent changes and allowing the money used on diapers to go towards other necessities.

Bristol Hospital, Clinical Manager, Julie Dinice; supports this bill stating diapers are a material basic need and are essential to the health and economic success of families. It is stated having to choose between less frequent diaper changes or less food at mealtime unfortunately is a reality for many families. It is stated that meeting diaper needs is a health imperative for families across the state.

Child and Family Agency of SECT, CEO, Allison Blake; supports this bill stating will be better prepared to succeed in school and become economically contributing citizens. Reducing diaper needs among Medicaid enrollees has the potential to reduce costs to Medicaid through reduced emergency department visits.

City of Hartford, Project Manager, Donna Redway; supports this bill stating that the City of Hartford serves a population that needs this service desperately and families would be more than appreciative to receive this help and support.

CT Maternal and Child Health Coalition, MSW, Marijane Carey; supports this bill stating diapers are a basic need. It is stated that for households with children experiencing diaper insecurity, the results are immediate and long-term. It is also stated that providing diapers is a simple trauma-informed action with a multitude of benefits for young children, parents, and the community that prospers when children succeed in their early years and beyond.

Connecticut Hospital Association; supports this bill stating diapers are a material basic need, like food and shelter, and are essential to the health and the economic success of families. It is stated "Diaper need" is defined as the "difference between the numbers of diapers infants and young children require to stay clean and comfortable less than the number of diapers a family can afford without cutting back on other essentials." It is stated

coverage of diapers under Medicaid is a potentially powerful structural intervention to address maternal and infant health.

Connecticut Citizen Action Group, Associate Director, Liz Dupont-Diehl; supports this bill stating Connecticut residents suffer from some of the worst racial, economic, and gender inequities in the country. It is stated that health-related benefits to children and mothers, their ability to attend work and school and childcare, are all well documented and will prevent other costs down the road.

Connecticut Children's, Community Relations Manager, Luis Rivera; supports this bill stating no family should struggle to provide clean diapers for their baby, unfortunately, this is the reality for many families in Connecticut.

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Director of Health Outreach, Ashley Starr Frechette; supports this bill stating it will drastically improve the health, economic, and educational outcomes for families and children across Connecticut.

The Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition, Allison Logan; supports this bill stating that low-income families face many obstacles and want to be good parents at the same time. It is stated that something as basic as a diaper should not be a need that is unmet in a state like Connecticut. It is suggested families should have what they need to care for the most vulnerable citizens.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Executive Director, Kathleen Flaherty; supports this bill stating families eligible for Medicaid may not have the financial resources available to maintain adequate supplies of diapers so that the youngest members of the family can be changed as often as they need to be. It is stated this bill would not only be good for babies and toddlers but also better for the mental health of their parents who would have one less financial stressor to worry about.

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), Policy Director, Madeline Granato; supports this bill stating diapers cost nearly \$100 per month per child and can be a serious burden for parents earning a low income or who are out of work. It is stated that when families struggle to afford diapers, they are forced to choose between their children's health and other needs.

Connecticut Working Families; Policy Director, Roger Senserrich; supports this bill stating diapers are expensive and the constant need for them puts a strain on a family budget. It is stated reliable access to diapers would help parents keep their children healthy, reducing the risk of infection, and having to miss days of school, forcing parents to stay home and miss work.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, Executive Director, Janet Stolfi Alfano; supports this bill stating ensuring diapers are covered under Medicaid is a logical next step given the significant negative health outcomes and associated costs related to not having an adequate supply. It is stated diapers for infants and toddlers should be considered as essential for optimal health as diapers for children and incontinence supplies for older adults are.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, Finance Administrative Manager, Danielle Blackstone; supports this bill stating this bill would drastically improve the health and economic outcomes for families and children across the state.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, Community Outreach Coordinator, Jennifer Kohl; supports this bill stating families who struggle to afford an adequate supply of diapers experience negative health, economic, and educational outcomes. It is stated a diaper is a basic essential need. It is stated unlike other basic essential needs, such as food and housing, there are no continuous safety net programs for diapers.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, Graduate Intern, Maddisyn M; supports this bill stating without access to clean and properly fitting diapers, children can develop painful and potentially life-threatening rashes and infections. It is stated this can lead to unnecessary medical expenses and hospitalizations, which can further strain families' budgets and the healthcare system. It is stated that expanding Medicaid coverage to include diapers will not only benefit individual families but also help to reduce the overall burden on our healthcare system by preventing costly health problems that can arise from a lack of diapers.

Eastern Connecticut Health Network, CEO, Deborah Weymouth; supports this bill stating nationally approximately 30% of families report a need for diapers. It is stated approving Medicaid coverage of diapers and seeking federal approval would address the unmet diaper need and demonstrate the state's commitment to improving the health and economic advancement of low-income families across Connecticut.

EBJ Child Care Program, Grace Bright; supports this bill stating diapers are an expensive necessity for a child to attend a quality childcare program.

Friends Center for Children, Executive Director, Allyx Schiavone; supports this bill stating is a necessity for families with young children and that affordability can create an extreme burden. It is stated reducing diaper needs among Medicaid enrollees has the potential to reduce costs to Medicaid through reduced emergency department visits. It is also stated parents will miss fewer days of work due to their children's illnesses. It is stated infants and toddlers will be better able to enroll in early education programs, increasing their school readiness and overall development.

Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Advocacy Director, Giovanna Shay; supports this bill stating that Medicaid coverage for diapers will improve physical and mental health for children and parents.

Griffin Health, President, Patrick Charmel; supports this bill stating that many families in our community are low-income and have to make difficult decisions when it comes to caring for their children. It is stated meeting diaper needs is a health imperative for families across our state.

Hartford Healthcare, Director of Community Health, Joseph Zuzel; supports this bill stating that diapers are a material basic need, like food and shelter, and are essential to the health and the economic success of families. It is stated the bill would help low-income families by improving their health.

Hartford Healthcare, Office Coordinator, Joanna Cotto; supports this bill stating that children's health and development will improve as diseases associated with infrequent diaper changing, such as urinary tract infections and diaper dermatitis, decrease. It is stated the diaper assistance program has been able to help several families utilize funds that would normally go to diapers and go towards other essentials needed in the home.

His Divine Will Fellowship, Inc., Pastor, Brenda Adkins; supports this bill stating how the Diaper Bank has helped the community with formal personal care items and the Diaper Bank understands the needs of families within the community.

Hospital for Special Care, CEO, Lynn Ricci; supports this bill stating nearly 100 percent of our pediatric patients with complex medical needs are Medicaid eligible. It is stated that families often face unemployment, or underemployment because of the chronic or catastrophic medical condition that brought their child to us and the ongoing home care requirements their child may need post-discharge. It is stated families should not have to choose between food, shelter, and other basic needs such as diapers

House of God Outreach, Pastor, Apostle Beverly Jackson; supports this bill stating increasing the budget of the Diaper Bank will help prevent the problem of diaper dermatitis which is a red inflammation caused by wet diapers remaining on infants too long. It is stated the cost of diapers monthly runs approximately \$70 to \$80 per month this bill will help struggling families have one less thing to worry about.

Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, Executive Director, Chris George; supports this bill stating diapers are an important part of the warm welcome they give immigrants when they arrive in Connecticut. It is stated there is a need to expand Medicaid coverage to include infant & toddler diapers.

Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, Food Pantry, Volunteer, Kate Lee; supports this bill stating that with an adequate number of diapers, children's health and development will improve as diseases associated with infrequent diaper changing, such as urinary infections and diaper dermatitis, decrease. It is stated parents will be more able to work and support their families because their children can now enroll in early education programs. It is stated that increased enrollment in early education will benefit childcare businesses and the economic health of the community.

Middlesex Health, President and CEO, Vincent Capece; supports this bill stating 54 children and two adults have been served by Diaper Connections through Middlesex Health and hopes to increase that number and further expand the program in the future. It is stated diapers are helping to meet a critical need in our community.

National Diaper Bank Network, Manager of State Policy, Lacey Gero; supports this bill stating diaper needs can be a barrier to childcare, causing some adults to miss an average of four workdays a month, perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty. It is stated a study found that adult income increased by \$11 for every \$1 invested in diaper assistance, as better access to childcare created more time for employment and to attend educational and training programs.

Near and Far Aid, Grant Chair, Joan Panagos; supports this bill stating that the passing of this bill would improve children's health and development. It is stated parents will be able to

work and support their families and miss fewer days of work due to the decrease in children's illnesses.

Nurse Family Partnership, Nurse Home Visitor, Rebecca Bernardo; supports this bill stating many families struggle financially and are trying their best to provide for their children as best as they can. It is stated from the newborn period into infancy, children go through many diapers, and diapers must be changed frequently to prevent infection and diaper rash. It is stated that, for parents who struggle financially, sometimes leaving a diaper on longer can mean more money for food or transportation, and other basic, important human needs. It is also stated that this reality is that not all people have the same privileges or financial status to not have to worry about budgeting for diapers.

Reliant Behavioral Health and Community Services, Owner & CEO, Lisa Hardy-Gardner; supports this bill stating the passage of this bill would assist with maintaining the overall health and well-being of both mother and child and increase access to early childhood education opportunities.

RVNA Health, LPN, Mayara Silva; supports this bill stating the passage of this bill would help children better prepare to succeed in school and become economically contributing citizens. It is stated this bill would also reduce the cost of emergency room visits caused by illnesses from infrequent diaper changes.

Stamford Health, President & CEO, Kathleen Silard; supports this bill stating Stamford Health's most recent triennial CHNA showed housing was a top concern for Stamford residents. It is stated the City of Stamford has reported that 40% of residents are housing insecure. It is also stated providing diapers would provide a small amount of much-needed economic stability for Medicaid-eligible families that could help them maintain a stable home environment for their children.

TEAM, Inc., President & CEO, David Morgan; supports this bill stating families in their community are low income and have to make difficult decisions when it comes to caring for their children this support from Medicaid would allow community action agencies to further extend help to other social needs.

Trinity Health of New England, Regional Director Community Health and Well Being, Carol Alessi; supports this bill stating Medicaid coverage of diapers and seeking federal approval would allow us to make a huge leap in addressing unmet diaper needs and demonstrate our state's commitment to improving the health and economic advancement of low-income families across the state.

Quinnipiac University, Professor of Psychology, Anne Eisbach; supports this bill stating research has shown that diaper needs lead to a range of negative outcomes for both children and families. Given these outcomes, it seems imperative to find a way to make sure that families have access to this basic need.

UCONN Health; supports this bill stating the efforts taken to provide families with diapers through collaboration with the Connecticut Hospital Association to create Diaper Connections, a program dedicated to distributing diapers to acute care hospitals and community-based organizations.

Unitarian Universalist Society, Minister, Josh Pawelek; supports this bill stating there is a significant financial need in the wider community and worsening economic inequality in our state. It is stated more families with young children struggling to stay afloat. It is stated diapers are essential and expensive and anything the state can do to lessen the burden will be impactful.

Yale New Haven Health; supports this bill stating there is a need within our communities to provide diapers and participate in Diaper Connections programs. It is stated this bill would assist families with much need support to ensure the health and well-being of their children.

Yale School of Nursing, Professor, Ann Williams; supports this bill stating parents are keeping their children at home and fail to work themselves when they are unable to provide an adequate supply of diapers. It is stated limited diaper leads to severe dermatitis, urinary tract infections, and the inability of children to attend a range of early education programs.

The following individuals have submitted testimony in support of this bill. It is stated children's health and development will improve as diseases associated with infrequent diaper changing, such as urinary tract infections and diaper dermatitis, decrease. It is stated children will miss fewer days of preschool and Infants and toddlers will be better able to enroll in early education programs, thus increasing their school readiness and overall development. It is also stated parents will benefit as they are working hard to create safe, secure lives for themselves and their children. It is stated reducing diaper needs among Medicaid enrollees has the potential to reduce costs to Medicaid through reduced emergency department visits.

Connecticut Resident, Anonymous

Connecticut Resident, Clorinda Velez

Connecticut Resident, Jane Alexander

Connecticut Resident, Hannah Koch

Connecticut Resident, Mary Madoule

Connecticut Resident, Meghann McKale

Connecticut Resident, Susan Taddei.

Connecticut Resident, Hamden, Bobbi Dynice.

Connecticut Resident, Hamden, Lauren Leitch

Connecticut Resident, Beacon Falls, Mairead Reily

Connecticut Resident, Glastonbury, Sara Lieberman

Connecticut Resident, Guilford, Nick Schupbach

Connecticut Resident, New Haven, Madison Mackay

Connecticut Resident, North Haven, Timothy Gabriele

Connecticut Resident, Orange, Nina Ruckes

Connecticut Resident, Ridgefield, Helynn Broder

Connecticut Resident, Ridgefield, Laura Shulman Cordeira

Connecticut Resident, Seymour, Amber Jean Hansen

Connecticut Resident, Uncasville, Maryellen Lyons

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

One person submitted testimony anonymously in opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Kelly Houston

Date: March 24, 2023