



**Testimony for Ways and Means Committee in Support of
House Bill 490 for Hearing on February 8, 2024**

Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Lendsey and I am here today in my role as executive director of Greater DC Diaper Bank to ask you to support House Bill 490. Diapers are a basic need and are critical to the health of the children who wear them and to the financial and emotional health of the families that care for those children.

Greater DC Diaper Bank's mission is to strengthen and empower families and individuals in need throughout the DC region by providing an adequate and reliable source for basic baby needs and personal hygiene products.

The Diaper Bank distributes 11 million diapers each year and serves approximately 38,000 families and 40,000 across Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia. Last year we distributed 4.9 million diapers—45% of our total distribution—in Maryland, as well as \$429,000 in value of other essential hygiene products like baby wipes, period products, and formula.

This January we brought on eight new partners, four of whom are located in Prince George's County, to expand our distributions in zip codes where we are meeting a lesser percentage of diaper need. These four joined our existing 13 partners in Prince George's County and our 20 partners in Montgomery County, now totaling 37 partners in Maryland. Through our partnerships, our diapers reached Marylanders in 105 unique zip codes in 2023.

Though this is expansive, it is not nearly enough to end diaper need for the 29,000 children under the age of 4 living in households at 200% or below the federal poverty level in our Maryland service area – namely, Montgomery and Prince George's counties. Even at this output level, on average we serve about 20% of these children each month.

Providing diapers for your baby is not a choice – though we see too many families who are faced every month with the question of buying diapers or other essential basic items. We asked our families this very question and 88% told us that they had to choose between buying diapers and spending money on food, rent, utilities, transportation, and clothing for their families.

The impact of these decisions is felt by everyone in the family. If a family runs short of diapers and cannot change their baby as frequently as they would like, we know that can lead to health issues like diaper rash and urinary tract infections, not to mention that babies who are in wet diapers cry more and can be more irritable, which adds to the stress of being a parent. For parents, not having enough diapers is a huge stressor.

At our organization, we are grappling with how to replace the emergency-based revenue that has dried up post-pandemic. Encouraging Marylanders to support our organization helps build up our base of support so that we can continue operating at our current levels, and provide new support each year. Nearly \$300,000 of our annual operating budget – about 8% – comes from monthly



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supporters who commit donations starting at \$15 a month, and approximately 30% of our overall budget is supported by donations from individuals.

Showing support for organizations like ours, and like others in Maryland doing similar work including the Maryland Diaper Bank and Share Baby, through tax subtractions that encourage Marylanders to donate, makes a statement about what we value as a community. This bill shows that we as a state value the health of babies, caregivers, and families and understand the critical work of nonprofits addressing these issues.

Thank you for your time.