



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

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House Bill 87 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs – Waiver – Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products

House Appropriations Committee
January 24, 2023

Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate about and advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates supports HB 87, which requires the Department of Human Services to apply for a federal waiver that allows Marylanders who receive the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) to use their benefits to purchase diapers and menstrual products.

Diapers and menstrual products are a necessary expense for families, and are a substantial cost burden for low-income families. The average cost of an adequate supply of diapers is \$75-\$100 per month, per child.¹ Children need a sufficient supply of diapers to be dry, clean and healthy, and without that, children are more susceptible to infections, rashes, and illnesses.² According to the National Diaper Bank Network, diapers banks across the United States have seen a sharp rise in demand, with some diaper banks seeing a 500% increase in people seeking diapers.³ Menstrual products are another necessary expense for families, and the cost of products are unattainable for many low-income households. On average, families can spend anywhere between \$5 and \$10 for a box of tampons and pads, or significantly more for durable products like menstrual cups. Given that menstruating individuals have approximately 12-13 menstrual cycles a year, the cost of menstrual products quickly adds up in a tight budget.

Diaper and menstrual product need disproportionately harms low-income women and families of color. Diaper need makes it difficult for women to re-enter the workforce, as child care providers require parents to bring with them an adequate supply of diapers. Consequently, diaper need has been identified as a reason that parents may not attend work or school.⁴ Moreover, a body of research demonstrates that –due to the stresses of living in poverty – low-income children often start puberty earlier than their peers, and students of color menstruate earlier than their white peers.⁵ Tragically, many low-income individuals use menstrual products for excessive periods of time to stretch their supply, increasing risk for deadly conditions like toxic shock syndrome.

Building flexibility in SNAP and WIC to purchase diapers and menstrual products will increase the health, safety, and security of low-income families. Diapers and menstrual products are rarely available at shelters and food banks, so allowing families to purchase diapers and menstrual products with SNAP and WIC increases a family's self-determination to leverage the resources they have to meet their needs.

WA appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 87.

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, *Chair of Welfare Advocates*

¹ Diaper Need and Its Impact on US Families. 2019. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Diaper-Need-and-Its-Impact-on-US-Families.pdf>

² Diaper Need. 2019.

³ CBS News. 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/diaper-prices-going-up-pandemic/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Psychological Bulletin. (2004). *Timing of Pubertal Maturation in Girls: An Integrated Life Approach.* <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2004-20177-005>
