



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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House Bill 87 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs – Waiver – Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products
Appropriations Committee – January 24, 2023
SUPPORT

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0087. We need to address *diaper need* and *period poverty* in the state of Maryland. Existing social programs do not adequately address the diaper and menstrual product needs of mothers/caregivers and menstruating women. This bill proposes a commonsense solution to this persistent problem by requiring Maryland Department of Human Services to apply for any waiver made available by the USDA to allow SNAP and/or WIC recipients to use their benefits for menstrual products and diapers. More importantly, if the waiver is granted, the bill requires DHS to be responsible for implementation.

Period Poverty. Period poverty is the lack of access to affordable menstrual products. When we think of poverty, food insecurity and homelessness are at the top of mind. However, for women and girls, inability to afford hygienic menstrual products is a reality and impacts other aspects of their lives. They are often embarrassed, and in some cultures ashamed, to discuss their menstrual cycles. Lack of access to menstrual products can impact a girl's education, largely due to poverty, but stigma is also a factor. When a girl misses school because of her period, we are not prioritizing her education. When a working mother misses work because she can't afford her menstrual products, this compounds the poverty and ultimately the needs of her family.¹ According to the Maryland State Fact Sheet on Period Poverty, there are 1,297,986 women and girls between the ages 12 to 44 in the state. Of those, 1 in 8 lives below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

Diaper Need. Diaper need is the lack of a sufficient supply of diapers to keep an infant or child clean, dry, and healthy. According to the National Diaper Bank Network, babies without clean diapers are exposed to more potential health risks & less likely accepted to daycares, leaving parents unable to attend work. According to the National Diaper Bank Network one in three families struggles to provide clean diapers for their baby. Furthermore, diapers are essential to the well-being of Maryland families. In Maryland, 72% of mothers with infants are in the workforce and most daycare facilities require parents to provide diapers for their child. In Maryland 16% of children under age 18 are infants and toddlers and 12% of those live in families earning less than 100% of FPL.

We ask for your support for HB0087 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Diana E. Conway
WDC President

JoAnne Koravos
WDC Vice President Advocacy

¹ [Period Poverty. The Belittling of a Basic Need](https://ppoverty.org/period-poverty-the-belittling-of-a-basic-need/?gclid=Cj0KCQjAilSeBhCCARIsAHnAzT_V9v1-Gdffbw80FMEnGYpZmYtENbADgT2QpdQEAdFyWkuXcwQysVkaAjzdEALw_wcB) (October 20, 2022). https://ppoverty.org/period-poverty-the-belittling-of-a-basic-need/?gclid=Cj0KCQjAilSeBhCCARIsAHnAzT_V9v1-Gdffbw80FMEnGYpZmYtENbADgT2QpdQEAdFyWkuXcwQysVkaAjzdEALw_wcB