

DATE:February 2, 2023COMMITTEE: FinanceBILL NO:Senate Bill 52BILL TITLE:Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs – Waiver – Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene
ProductsPOSITION:Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 52 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs – Waiver – Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products

Bill Summary:

SB 52 would require the Department of Human Services to apply for a waiver to allow benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children to be used to purchase diapers or menstrual hygiene products, if the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes the waiver available.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, schoolbased, and community-based programs. Over 27,000 individuals receive services annually at Kennedy Krieger.

The vision for the newly established Office for Health Equity Inclusion and Diversity (O-HEID) at Kennedy Krieger Institute is to promote the health and well-being of those who work and receive training and services at Kennedy Krieger Institute. The O-HEID uses evidence, culturally relevant, and equity-based approaches that assures diversity and inclusion. The O-HEID is working to establish collaboration, data, and metrics to address remediable disparities within our patient populations, policies, and practices.

Rationale:

Access to diapers and menstrual products is a critical facet to ensuring the health and well-being of women and children, which are inextricably linked.

One study of low income women found that about two-thirds (64%) were unable to afford needed menstrual products during the previous year and nearly half of women (46%) could not afford to buy both food and menstrual hygiene products during the past year.¹ Indeed, the lifetime cost of menstrual products for women is about \$18,000,² while diapers are estimated to cost upwards of \$1,800 in two years for one child.³

Women from vulnerable backgrounds, such as those experiencing homelessness, have particularly difficulty with accessing menstrual products⁴ and menstrual product insecurity has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic due to income loss⁵. The pandemic has also increased levels of diaper need which adversely affects parent stress⁶ and only a small amount of low-income families have been found to be able to access diapers through existing community resources or diaper banks.⁷

Access to hygiene products for women and children are especially important in light of the pay gaps for women in Maryland (86 cents to every dollar that men earn)⁸, which is further exacerbated for women of color with Black women earning 69 cents and Hispanic/Latina women earning 47 cents for every dollar paid to white men, respectively⁹. Additionally, people of color are disproportionally affected by lack of access to hygiene products. For example, families living in low income areas who had less access to diapers in their community were more

likely to identify as Black or African American, face challenges affording housing costs, have homes or automobiles in need of repair, experience neighborhood violence, and have less educational attainment.¹⁰

As such, providing hygiene products via federal government programs is an important way to support health equity among women and families with young children in Maryland.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 52.

References

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