



**Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony in Support of SB52
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs - Waiver - Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products
March 21, 2023**

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair; The Honorable Mark Chang, Vice Chair; and Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB52 and asks the Committee for a favorable report. This bill, which would require the state to apply for a waiver from the Department of Agriculture, if given the opportunity, that would allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase diapers and feminine hygiene products, addresses an ongoing and sometimes overlooked need. Access to these necessary products, which are not covered by any other public benefits programs, remains a challenge for too many of our neighbors. These products can be very expensive and place a tremendous burden on lower-income households. Historically, our board, along with the Maryland Community Action Partnership, has recognized the importance of access to these products.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

- Families may keep diapers on for too long or empty solids and reuse disposable diapers, resulting in rashes, urinary tract infections, or worse.
- Diapers, which cost nearly \$100 per month per child, can be a serious burden for parents with low earnings and those who are out of work or unable to work.
- Many child care providers require parents to provide diapers each day. At one diaper bank, 56% of parents who needed child care to go to work reported missing work because they lacked diapers.¹

To address this need, last year, the Maryland Community Action Partnership applied for a federal Department of Health and Human Services grant to support diaper distribution at Community Action Agencies in the state. Our board, along with the Maryland and DC Diaper Banks, supported this grant application. Unfortunately, the grant was not funded, and this need remains great throughout Maryland.

¹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/end-diaper-need-and-period-poverty-families-need-cash-assistance-to>

Similar to the need for diapers and diapering supplies, many women face challenges paying for feminine hygiene products, something referred to as “period poverty”. A survey of 2,000 women (aged 18–55) found that 49% have faced a lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, hand washing facilities and/or waste management. Sixty percent of respondents admitted to budgeting in order to afford sanitary items and 79% made sacrifices or gone with less in order to afford their necessities.²

Lower-income residents face many challenges purchasing these products, especially in an area like Montgomery County, and many other parts of the state, where the cost of living is very high. The Self-Sufficiency Standard, which measures the income required to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level, for a single adult with an infant is \$94,675 in Montgomery County, nearly five times the federal poverty level.³

This bill takes a step in the right direction towards addressing some very important unmet needs. We strongly encourage the Committee to support SB52.

² <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

³ <https://maryland-cap.org/the-maryland-2023-self-sufficiency-standard-calculator/>