



Testimony in Support of SB4057

*Submitted by Jeannie Higdon on behalf of Children's Home & Aid
February 9, 2022*

Good afternoon. My name is Jeannie Higdon, and I am a Program Manager, at Children's Home & Aid. Children's Home & Aid is a statewide social services agency with programs ranging from early care and education programs to behavioral health services to child welfare programs. Our mission is to advance the well-being of children by investing in families to disrupt the systemic and multi-generational cycle of racial, social, and economic inequality.

I want to thank Senator Hunter for convening today's hearing and Senator Villivalam for sponsoring this important legislation. We strongly urge the committee to pass SB4057 today.

For those of you who do not have children or have not had young children in a while, diapers are expensive; costing families anywhere from \$80-\$100 per month per child, and those costs are going up. From the end of 2019 to June 2021, the price of diapers rose 12 percent.¹ And that is before Huggies, Pampers, and Pull-Ups all announced additional price increases. A 2014 report from the Center for Policy and Economic Research found that families in the lowest 20% of income with infants pay 14 percent of their income for diapers alone. This is 2 to 3 times more than the next 20 percent and fourteen times what the richest 20 percent of families pay for diapers.²

The rising costs of diapers has many real-world impacts on children and their families. Diaper poverty is a serious issue experienced by approximately 1 in 3 parents nationally.³ For these caregivers, many of whom are already balancing multiple basic living expenses, how to pay for diapers is yet another variable they need to factor in. Parents often know exactly how many diapers they have left for their child and this "diaper math" leads to added caregiver mental stress and impacts well-being. Caregivers experiencing diaper poverty cannot afford to keep their child clean and dry, often stretching the time between diaper changes or using inadequate options as a substitute. These types of coping strategies can lead to irritation, prolonged diaper rash, UTIs, or even long-term health issues. Sometimes parents are even forced to stay home from work because most early care and education centers require parents to provide the appropriate number of diapers per day for their child. Any relief for families when it comes to diapers, wipes, and formula, like reducing the sales tax for those items, is sound policy.

We also know from our programming how valuable diapers and wipes can be. On average, families who struggle with diaper need are short 19 diapers each month.⁴ In our two crisis nurseries in Bloomington and Rockford, we distributed over 60,000 diapers and 2,000 packs of wipes in the first

¹ Terlep, S. "Rising Diaper Prices Prompt States to Get Behind Push to Pay." The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/states-getbehind-push-to-pay-for-diapers-11627045200>

² Cashman, Kevin. "Policies Like the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act Will Help the Poor Pay for Diapers." Center for Economic and Policy Research. <https://www.cepr.net/the-hygiene-assistance-for-families-of-infants-and-toddlers-act-will-help-the-poor-pay-for-diapers/>

³ Diaper Need and its Impact on U.S. Families." National Diaper Bank Network. Diaper-Need-and-Its-Impact-on-US-Families.pdf (nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org), pg 1

⁴ Diaper Need and its Impact on U.S. Families." National Diaper Bank Network. Diaper-Need-and-Its-Impact-on-US-Families.pdf (nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org), pg 1

eleven months of 2021. This represents over \$75,000 worth of items. In Bloomington, we host an annual “Stuff the Bus” campaign, where the local community fills a large commuter bus with basic need items. This is in direct response to the needs of our families and others in the community who need this support more now than ever.

We look forward to working with this committee and other members of the General Assembly to ensure these basic needs are more affordable for Illinois families. Thank you for your time today, and we strongly urge a yes vote to move this bill to the Senate floor.