



**Ohio House of Representatives
House Ways and Means
House Bill 118
May 23, 2023
Jessica Salem, Executive Director,
Center for Health Equity at Dayton Children's Hospital**

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Manning and Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 118, co-sponsored by Representatives Miller (R-Ashland) and Santucci (R-Howland Township).

My name is Jessica Salem and I serve as the executive director of the Center for Health Equity at Dayton Children's Hospital, we support the passage of HB118 which would exempt products including diapers, car seats, carriers, strollers, cribs, and baby monitors from the sales and use tax.

The Dayton Children's Center for Health Equity works to better understand the health disparities that exist amongst our children, identify the reasons behind why a child is not thriving and work with the community to provide the support necessary at a much earlier point so that all of Ohio's kids can thrive.

The Center for Health Equity employs new and innovative approaches to reduce disparities and improve community health. Because we know the importance of the first five years of a child's life in their ultimate health and life trajectory, many of our programs focus on the health and safety of infants and young children.

Through our programming, we work closely with hundreds of families each year. In fiscal year 2022 alone, we supported over 115 families with childhood safety products and 250 families with car seats. There is a high demand for child safety products.

the Dayton region to improve health and educational outcomes for children. Our programs focus on parenting support, injury prevention, improving infant mortality and increasing kindergarten readiness. We work with families every day who share how difficult it is to raise children with the rising cost of products, childcare and other infant essential. Child products such as car seats, infant carriers, strollers, cribs, and baby monitors are critical to achieving the optimal health for young children. While most of us take these essential products for granted and just find way in our budgets, may families find themselves having to choose which ones to buy or even find them out of their reach. The exemption in House Bill 118 would help to ease the financial burden on Ohio families raising children. The elimination of sales tax on these products will help Ohio families have access to the essential items necessary for the health and safety of their children

According to the National Diaper Bank Network, there are 549,624 children younger than three in Ohio. The average monthly cost of diapers is \$80. Most childcare facilities require parents to provide diapers for their child. Nationally, 57% of parents experiencing diaper need who rely on childcare said they missed an average of four days of school or work in the past month because they didn't have diapers. Not being able to pay for diapers can have a significant impact on whether a child can attend childcare or whether a parent can work and so anything that can be done to reduce that cost, will go a long way for families working to make ends meet.

Cribs and baby monitors are also critical in achieving optimal health outcomes for children. Sadly, there are infant deaths occurring from unsafe sleep practices at an alarming rate across the state of Ohio. Recently, Montgomery County reported there have been 8 infant deaths due to unsafe sleep practices already in 2023. One way to reduce unsafe sleep deaths is the use of cribs. Providing a tax relief for a safe crib could mean the difference between being able to afford one and that could save lives.

As a state working to become more family friendly by attracting top talent for our workforce, providing a tax exemption for critical products for raising children is good policy.

Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

Jessica (Saunders) Salem, MPA
Executive Director
Center for Health Equity
Dayton Children's Hospital
1010 Valley Street
Dayton, Ohio 45404-1815
O: 937-641-3385
E: salemj@childrensdayton.org