



State Senator  
**TINA MAHARATH**

**3rd District**

**Sponsor Testimony**  
**Senator Tina Maharath**  
**Senate Bill 121**  
**Health Committee**  
**Wednesday, December 8, 2021**

Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, Vice Chair Antani and members of the Senate Health committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 121. Senate Bill 121 designates the last week of September as "Diaper Need Awareness Week" to raise awareness of the need of diapers for low-income families and their babies and toddlers. It is also meant to inspire the Ohio Legislature and all Ohioans to increase sustainable support for diaper bank programs in Ohio.

Children in low-income families are at the greatest risk of suffering the effects of diaper need. An average monthly supply of diapers costs approximately \$80. Current public support programs help some, but young children have additional needs. Far too often are families forced to choose between food on the table and the appropriate number of diapers for their children. The only federal assistance program that can be used for diapers is TANF. Unfortunately, for many families TANF has to cover many other expenses, including heat, electric and water bills, rent, clothing, transportation, and other basic needs. Limited funds are left available to purchase enough diapers to keep a baby clean, dry, and healthy.

A nationwide study conducted by the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN) and Huggies found that 36 percent of families struggle with diaper need. When short on diapers, two in five families reported keeping their children in the same diaper longer. This practice can lead to skin rashes, UTIs, and other harmful side effects in children. Lack of diapers can also impact a child's access to education and a family's ability to work. Most daycare and early childhood education programs require families to supply a day's worth of diapers in order for a child to attend. If a family cannot provide these, then their child misses out on the opportunity to learn and the child's caretaker potentially misses out on work, making it even harder to pay for diapers.

In response to the rise in diaper need, the number of diaper banks across the country have grown substantially from just 40 NDBN member banks in 2011 to over 300 today. In 2020, Ohio's 9 NDBN-member diaper banks distributed over 4 million diapers to families in need. While this represents great progress, two-thirds of families are still not even aware that diaper banks exist. That is why it is important that we bring awareness to this issue by officially designating Diaper Need Awareness Week. By drawing attention to the issue, we can also inspire actions such as diaper drives to help ensure Ohio children have the diapers they need to stay clean and healthy.



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I appreciate your attention to this important issue and I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 121. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.