Written Testimony for Dave Kuta

Proponent for SB-80

To designate a Diaper Awareness Week

 My name is Dave Kuta, and I’m submitting this testimony as a proponent of SB-80 to designate a Diaper Awareness Week. I believe that raising awareness to the need that exists will help us to eventually close the “diaper gap”. My understanding is that at least one other testimony has (or will) give you details about the statistics on this subject. The statistics themselves are powerful, and they point to a genuine need that exists in our community and in our country. My intent is to give you a small glimpse into the personal side of this story.

 I am a regular volunteer at the 5th Ave. food pantry that is sponsored by Vineyard Columbus. On average, we serve between 110-125 families per week, many of them having one or more children who need diapers. Because we have a limited budget on which to feed that many families, we rarely had diapers to give away, because they were too expensive to buy. When someone would donate some diapers to our pantry, we would only be able to give away 6 diapers to each family because there were so many who needed them. It was not even enough for one day’s worth for one child, but it was the best we could do. Since the Columbus Diaper Coalition has partnered with our pantry, we are now able to give away 30 diapers per child, and in the correct size for their kids. So if a mom comes to us needing diapers for her twins, now she gets 60 diapers instead of 6. It’s still only a fraction of what is needed for the month, but it definitely helps!

 Occasionally I get the privilege of being the person who helps hand out the bagged food at the window. It is my favorite job there because I get to interact with our guests and see the look on their faces as I hand them one or more large bags of food. Standing next to me is another volunteer who hands out personal care items and diapers. When they see the amount of diapers they receive, they are incredibly grateful! I’ve seen moms who were practically in tears because they were so thankful for all we were able to give. It brings joy to my heart to see how we’re able to meet some genuine needs. It keeps me coming back week after week!

 Until our partnership with the Columbus Diaper Coalition, I was completely unaware of the Diaper Gap. Like many people, I assumed there was some other state or federal assistance out there somewhere to help. By doing this small act to raise awareness, my hope is that more people will donate to organizations like the CDC, or donate to local churches, food pantries, and other ministries that help to close this gap. I want us to be able to do even more to help families that are struggling to make ends meet.

 This year, we’ve had Folic Acid Awareness Week (Jan 7-13), Sleep Awareness Week (March 3-10), Don’t Fry Day (May 24th), and School Backpack Awareness Day (Sept 18th), to name just a few of the recognized awareness needs out there. I’m not trying to make fun of any of those, but don’t you think people deserve to be aware of family needs for clean diapers for their children? I’m a dad, and I remember how much diapers cost for my daughter. Are any of you parents? Do you remember buying a couple cases of diapers every month at $35 dollars each? Now imagine trying to do that on a minimum wage job. Some families out there have it really hard, and I believe it’s our responsibility to do any small thing we can to help.

 I urge you to pass this bill.

 Thank you for your time.

 Sincerely,

 Dave Kuta