

Written Testimony for SB 80

Submitted by Christa Hester

Representative of Worthington Resource Pantry

My name is Christa Hester, and I am the Volunteer Coordinator at the Worthington Resource Pantry. We serve 8 zip codes in Northern Franklin County and Southern Delaware County. We are a partner of the Columbus Diaper Coalition and recipients of nearly 150 packs of diapers each month, for which we are incredibly grateful. We also receive sporadic donations of diapers from community members. We are in full support of creating a Diaper Need Awareness Week to better advocate for babies and families in our communities.

Our pantry is dedicated to providing families in our service area with fresh healthy food and with personal care items. For our families with small children, diapers are the number-one requested item from the pantry. And when you consider that 41% of the people served by our pantry are children, you can immediately see the need. In fact, we provided food, diapers and other personal care items to children between the ages of 0 and 4 years old 4,645 times this past fiscal year.

Our neighbors rely on the pantry and on other charitable sources for baby food, diapers, and wipes.

Low income families, like all of us, face competing demands on their budgets. For families with babies and toddlers, the average monthly cost of diapers, which has been calculated from \$40 to \$80 a month, can put a strain on the family's monthly budget. We act as the safety net for these families by providing food and diapers so that the family can devote precious resources to other necessary expenses such as rent, utilities, and insurance.

We see parents go to great lengths to provide for their families. While our food and diapers are free, there is a real cost and time investment made by parents to visit the pantry, manage their schedules, coordinate transportation, and wait in lines to get diapers. We wholeheartedly believe families are doing what they can to provide for their babies and small children in the best way possible.

When we run out of diapers at the pantry, parents often ask us for information about other outlets for diapers. Unfortunately, there aren't other outlets, especially in our neighborhood. So what do families do? When no other option is available, families re-use diapers. With a readily available and consistent supply of diapers – which we currently do not have - children would be freed from wearing the same dirty diaper for long periods of time, and would experience overall improved health and quality of life. Parents would be freed from stress or anxiety as it relates to providing a healthy and comfortable life for their children.

The need is obvious – diapers are not an optional or luxury item. Clean diapers promote good health in the smallest members of our community. By establishing a Diaper Need Awareness Week, we hope that more members of the community will be moved to act, to share, and to help provide more of this essential resource.

With the passage of Senate Bill 80, a wave of support and awareness will permeate the state. We want to be champions and supporters of families with babies and small children, and we want more people to be made aware of this issue. We are in favor of the Diaper Need Awareness Week. We urge your support of Senate Bill 80.