

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

Even prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, one in three families struggled to afford enough diapers to keep their child clean, dry and healthy. The economic fall-out from the pandemic exacerbated families' already strained budgets and greatly increased diaper need across the country. The struggle to afford material basic necessities, such as diapers, has not abated and will remain a barrier to families' health and economic well-being if not addressed through an expanded partnership of non-profit organizations, businesses and the federal government.

As we work to build strong foundations for all children and families, we respectfully request the appropriation of an additional \$200 million in funding for the Social Services Block Grant to fund a national grant program focused on distributing diapers to the millions of families in need. This program would leverage an existing network of over 200 diaper banks and their more than 5,000 partner agencies across all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. The resources provided by this dedicated appropriation would enable organizations and agencies to scale their distribution efforts to address a substantial backlog of unmet need and cover regional service gaps.

Diaper banks and other non-profit organizations have always stretched limited resources to meet just part of the need in their communities. Without enough diapers each day, infants and toddlers, as well as older adults and people with disabilities, are at risk of skin infections, open sores, urinary tract infections and other conditions that may require medical attention. With the healthcare system burdened by COVID-19 infections, we must take preventative measures to avoid unnecessary hospital and emergency room visits. Furthermore, parents unable to diaper their children are more likely to suffer from parental depression. We should be doing everything we can to reduce the levels of stress struggling families with young children are experiencing during this crisis by funding programs that provide access to the basic necessities all babies and toddlers need to thrive. Ensuring families have the diapers they need is an efficient and cost-effective method to improving the health and well-being of parents and children across the country.

Diaper banks across the country have seen double, triple or even eight-fold increases in the numbers of diapers distributed, reflecting a level of need that has remained constant since the

early days of the pandemic. Non-profit organizations took swift and decisive action to respond to the emergency in their communities, on average increasing diaper distribution by 50 percent. While diaper banks and other non-profits continue to find innovative solutions to the needs of their communities, charity alone cannot provide the resources necessary to address the unparalleled percentage of unmet diaper need in our country. In most cases, diaper banks need to increase distribution by another 50 to 150 percent in order to address the known need in their communities.

With the requested \$200 million, diaper banks and other non-profits across the country can support parents in utilizing available child care, succeeding at work and keeping their children healthy. Research has demonstrated an \$11 return for each dollar invested in a diaper bank's distribution from the combined benefits of improved child health and parental workforce participation associated with addressing diaper need.

Appropriating an additional \$200 million to the Social Services Block Grant for the purpose of creating a diaper distribution grant program would mark the first time Congress has provided much-needed resources specifically targeted to addressing diaper need. This modest funding proposal could meet as much as 40 percent of pre-COVID-19 diaper need and yield a massive return on investment for children, families and communities across the country. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to continue working with you in ensuring that our Nation's next generation is provided a healthy start.

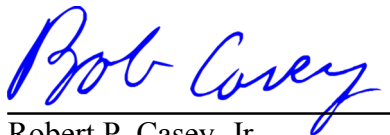
Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



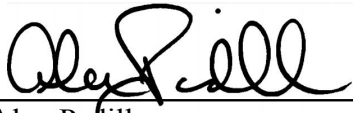
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



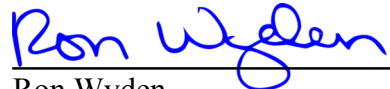
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
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