



DATE: February 23, 2021
TO: Human Services Committee
FROM: Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, The Alliance
RE: H.B. No. 6473, An Act Expanding the Diaper Bank to include Feminine Hygiene Products.

Good morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association representing community nonprofits. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year, and employ 14% of Connecticut's workforce, improving the quality of life in every city and town across the State.

The Alliance supports H.B. No. 6473, An Act Expanding the Diaper Bank to include Feminine Hygiene Products. The proposed legislation seeks to provide additional funding to the Diaper Bank of Connecticut to acquire and distribute feminine hygiene products (in addition to diapers) to women and families in need.

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut is the statewide organization that acquires and centrally distributes diapers through fifty community-based organizations. They have the capacity and expertise to add feminine hygiene products into their distribution system.

While 88% of women agree feminine hygiene products are essential for raising a child, they are simply **unaffordable for many low-income families**. In Connecticut, 1 in 8 women and girls between the ages of 12 and 44 lives below the Federal Poverty Level, and almost 60% of families living in poverty struggle to keep up with their bills and cover unexpected expenses.

While a monthly period is not unexpected, **without period supplies, women miss work** or resort to using rags, toilet paper, or even adult diapers. Worse, an estimated one in five low-income women reports missing work or similar commitments due to lack of access to period supplies.

Similarly, **feminine hygiene products help students stay in school**. An estimated one in four teens in the U.S. has missed school due to the lack of period supplies. In Connecticut, 40% of female public school students in grades 7 through 12 attend Title 1-eligible schools, meaning they have high concentrations of student poverty.

Related to the bill, the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget (HB-6439) reduces funding for the Connecticut Diaper Bank by \$168,300 in both fiscal years. While it is true that the Diaper Bank of Connecticut seeks to acquire diapers and feminine hygiene products regularly through **fund-raising and in-kind donations outside of DSS funding, these efforts still fall short of the need**. And that was the estimate before the COVID-19 pandemic.

No parent should be forced to choose between buying diapers or feminine hygiene products and paying for food, rent or utilities. This legislation would improve the quality of life and well-being of many parents, caregivers, young adults and children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.