

Melinda Corey
Albion
LD 1099

To the members of the Taxation Committee:

My name is Melinda Corey, and I live in Albion, Maine. Though I am a state employee, I submit this testimony on my personal time, and as a parent, former resource parent, community volunteer, and private citizen.

I am writing in support of LD 1099, An Act to Exempt Diapers from Sales Tax.

Having ready access to a supply of clean diapers is essential not only for bodily health, but also for mental health of those who utilize diapers and their caregivers alike.

Though Medicaid does cover diapers and related supplies for disabled youth and for adults who qualify for that benefit, many more families who utilize these products do not qualify - but do experience very real and impactful need in this area. Other benefits programs like SNAP and WIC, which support some young children and their families throughout our state, do not provide for this need for Maine's youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

My church has held an annual diaper drive to support our local essentials closet, which provide for needs families have outside of other benefits programs (like cleaning and hygiene supplies). They consistently tell us that diapers are the first item to go and that they can never have enough on the shelves to meet the level of need.

Additionally, Maine has a few diapers banks in the entire state, and they are not accessible to the vast majority of residents in need (though they are a great start and I also support expansion of diaper banks throughout the state).

I will never forget an experience I had as a home visitor in another area years ago. A family had just brought home their premature baby from the hospital after 9 months of NICU care. The baby had been born at just 23 weeks gestation. The family had limited resources, and the mother was unable to work due to the high level of needs of the infant that prevented him from attending childcare. One day when I entered for my visit, I discovered the mother in her bathroom, drying used diapers with a blow dryer so she could put them back onto her baby, as she had not one clean diaper in her house and didn't know when she would be able to obtain more. Unfortunately, diaper need like this is not at all uncommon in our state.

It is also very challenging for most families to utilize cloth diapering; this may be more economical long-term, but it requires a significant investment in supplies up front. Additionally, this is only feasible for families who live in settings with laundry access and who don't need to utilize childcare, as most laundromats and childcare facilities are not able to allow for cloth diapers.

You will hear many helpful statistics about this from other valuable interested parties like the National Diaper Bank Network, so I won't repeat those here. Suffice to say that not only is this better for health and wellbeing of children and families, but it would also help create positive economic benefits the likes of which have already been documented in other states providing various forms of diaper assistance.

LD 1099 is an important step in the direction of ensuring all Mainers have access to the basic materials they need for not only to survive, but to thrive, and to live with dignity. No one wants to feel like they aren't able to provide their infant or disabled child or adult loved one with such a crucial item. As someone who has spent my entire adult life caring for children, youth, and older adults, all of whom have needed diapers at some point, I strongly urge the passage of this bill.

Thank you for your service to our state, and for your time and consideration of this bill.