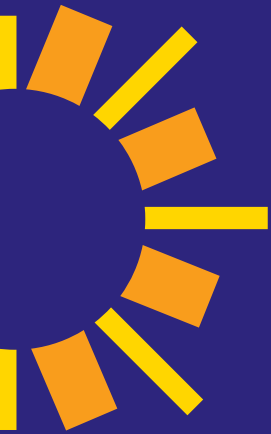


Eliminating Diaper Insecurity

for Illinois Infants
and Young Children

MARCH 2024

Brightpoint
Strong Families • Thriving Children



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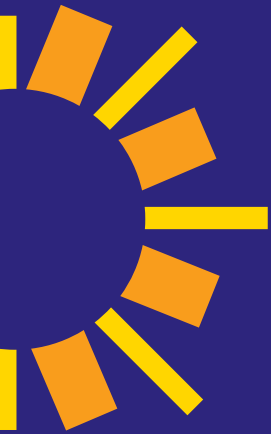


Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 1: How Diaper Insecurity Affects Children and Families	2
Diaper insecurity - definition and impacts	2
The financial implications of diaper insecurity	3
The health implications of diaper insecurity	4
The emotional implications of diaper insecurity	5
When financial stress leads to a child welfare response	6
Why Brightpoint cares about diaper insecurity	7
SECTION 2: Solutions to Diaper Insecurity	8
Three essential elements of successful diaper insecurity solutions	8
Solution Diaper Allowance	9
Solution Funding Early Childhood Providers to Provide Diapers to Families	12
Solution Maximizing Medicaid Dollars	14
Solution Eliminate or Reduce the Diaper Tax	18
Solution Use State Dollars to Increase Diaper Distribution	21
CONCLUSION: The Path Forward for Eliminating Diaper Insecurity in Illinois	25
APPENDIX A List of Bills to Reduce or Eliminate the Diaper Tax in Illinois since 2013	26
APPENDIX B Additional States with Diaper Tax Proposals	27

Introduction

For many families, a diaper is not just a diaper. It is a costly item families must budget around while often sacrificing other necessities. Diaper supply can mean the difference between a child attending child care or their family members missing multiple days of work to care for them. For these reasons, diapers have become a tangible symbol that caregivers use to gauge how well they are providing for their families.

Despite the critical necessity of diapers, currently there are no direct state-level government benefits in place to allow caregivers who cannot otherwise afford them to access diapers.

We are pleased that Governor JB Pritzker announced in February plans for a \$1 million program to address diaper insecurity. Families and caregivers across Illinois and the country face diaper insecurity every day. Kara, a mom from one of Brightpoint's early childhood education and care programs shares her personal experience:

Some months are easier than others when it comes to paying for diapers. We try to do our diaper buying at the beginning of the month but it's expensive. It's a strain wondering if I've bought enough or if we're going to be short at the end of the month. Or if I have to buy cheaper diapers to get through the week, will it give my baby a diaper rash? Or will the diaper leak because it's not high quality? There's so many ifs, ands, or buts that goes into it. It seems like an easy thing but it's really not. It's a whole side job in itself trying to figure out how to afford diapers and find diapers that work best for my child. When my baby was sick, he was going through more diapers than I usually allocate for each month, and we were scrambling to find money to buy more. We've utilized Brightpoint for access to diapers during months that were particularly difficult, but it shouldn't be this much of a burden to diaper my baby.

In this report, we will describe the many ways that diaper insecurity negatively affects families and analyze potential solutions, with the goal of moving forward multiple ways to increase access to diapers for Illinois families.



About the Ahlquist Center at Brightpoint

Brightpoint created the Ahlquist Center for Policy, Practice & Innovation in 2013 as the center of gravity where the agency's practice and strategy experience, insights into innovative programming, and focus on policy and advocacy combine to accelerate change. The Ahlquist Center was established to change policies, systems, and practices to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in Illinois and to influence change nationally. The Ahlquist Center accomplishes this work through:

- Advancing state and federal public policies that remove barriers and create opportunities for children and families
- Improving the quality, delivery, and coordination of services – inside and outside of Brightpoint
- Incubating innovative practices that inform public policies

How Diaper Insecurity Affects Children and Families

Diaper insecurity – definition and impacts

Diaper insecurity occurs when parents cannot afford an adequate supply of diapers to change their child regularly.¹ According to a recent survey published by the National Diaper Bank Network, **approximately one in two caregivers experience diaper insecurity.**² This is an increase from prior surveys which consistently estimated diaper insecurity at one in three caregivers.³

Diaper insecurity impacts the physical health of children, as well as the emotional health and financial wellbeing of their caregivers.

Caregivers experiencing diaper insecurity cannot afford to keep their child in clean and dry diapers. In these circumstances, they often resort to alternate options like stretching the length of time between diaper changes or using other materials as a substitute. While Federal programs like the Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, more commonly referred to as WIC, seem like viable solutions to addressing diaper insecurity, diapers are ineligible purchases under these programs.⁴

No public benefit program in Illinois, other than direct cash programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), currently allows for the purchase of diapers. This includes SNAP and WIC.

1 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 3). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

2 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 2). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

3 National Diaper Bank Network, & Huggies. (2017, September 19). Diaper need continues to impact 1 in 3 U.S. families, according to new study by the National Diaper Bank Network and Huggies. PR Newswire. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/diaper-need-continues-to-impact-1-in-3-us-families-according-to-new-study-by-the-national-diaper-bank-network-and-huggies-300524529.html>

4 National Diaper Bank Network. (n.d.). Federal Issues. National Diaper Bank Network. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/federal-issues/>

The financial implications of diaper insecurity

Caregivers in poverty are faced with many complex decisions to provide for their family. How to pay for diapers is yet another difficult choice. Infants and toddlers go through up to 12 diapers per day, which can cost families between \$80 to \$100 per month per child.⁵ And those costs are rising. **Since January 2019, the average price of a package of diapers increased by 32 percent.**⁶ This cost is a huge burden for families already struggling to meet basic needs. Diapers are a necessity for families, but they are priced as a luxury.

Additionally, caregivers in the lowest income brackets are impacted the most by high diaper prices. A 2016 report found the lowest 20 percent of earners with young children spent 14 percent of their income on diapers alone, a far higher percentage than those earners in higher income brackets.⁷ A survey of diaper bank users in Kansas City, Missouri found one in five caregivers used payday loans or other lending programs to afford diapers.⁸ While buying diapers in bulk seems like a good option to save money, caregivers often cannot buy in bulk due to the high upfront cost. This leaves them with the option of buying individual packages of diapers, which results in paying more for diapers at higher prices over time.

Head Start and Diapers

Head Start/Early Head Start center-based programs are required to provide diapers for children while in their care. And yet, families in these programs still report needing assistance to afford diapers for when their child is home.

Parents experiencing diaper insecurity have to make difficult choices to provide clean diapers for their children every day. According to a 2023 survey conducted by the National Diaper Bank Network of caregivers experiencing diaper insecurity:⁹

- **One in three caregivers** reported having skipped a bill to afford diapers for their children.
- **19 percent** of households reported they had to cut back on spending for utilities to be able to afford diapers.
- **15 percent** of households reported they had to cut back on spending for their mortgage or rent to be able to afford diapers.
- **39 percent** of households reported cutting back on their personal savings.
- **25 percent** of households reported cutting back on transportation costs.
- **24 percent** of adults reported spending less on laundry to afford diapers.

Diaper insecurity vs. diaper need

Literature on the subject often refers to a lack of diapers as “diaper need”. We will be referring to this issue as “diaper insecurity” to better reflect the experience of families and their struggle to gain access to diapers for their children.

Why not cloth diapers?

When we reference diapers throughout this report, we will always be referring to disposable diapers. While cloth diapers may be an option for some families, they present additional challenges. Using cloth diapers requires either access to an expensive cleaning service, or access to private laundry facilities, as many laundromats will not allow cloth diapers to be cleaned in their facilities. Second, many early childhood care and education centers are unable to accept cloth diapers and require disposable diapers. It is not surprising then that according to a 2016 survey of cloth diaper users, 46 percent were full time parents, 62 percent owned their homes, and 96 percent washed their diapers in their own washer and dryer.*

* Source: Change-Diapers.com. (2016). Cloth Diaper User Demographics – the Survey Results. <https://change-diapers.com/cloth-diaper-user-demographics-survey-results/>

5 National Diaper Bank Network. (2022). Fast Facts: Diaper Need. https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Fast_Facts_DiaperNeed_Dec_2022.pdf

6 Scarpino, M. (2023, August 16). Parents struggle to afford basic baby needs as diaper prices continue to rise. FOXBusiness. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/economy/parents-struggle-afford-basic-baby-needs-diaper-prices-rise>

7 Cashman, K. (2015, November 23). Policies Like the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act Will Help the Poor Pay for Diapers. Center for Economic and Policy Research. <https://www.cepr.net/the-hygiene-assistance-for-families-of-infants-and-toddlers-act-will-help-the-poor-pay-for-diapers/>

8 Happy Bottoms Diaper Bank. Why Diapers – HappyBottoms. (n.d.). <https://happybottoms.org/learn-take-action/why-diapers/>

9 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 9 -10). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

Diaper insecurity also impacts a caregiver’s earning potential. Many early childhood care and education providers—even those subsidized by the state—require caregivers to provide disposable diapers for their child to attend. If caregivers cannot provide diapers, they are forced to make alternate arrangements for their child or skip work or school to care for their child. **A recent national study found one in four caregivers experiencing diaper insecurity reported missing work or school due to a lack of diapers. This results in an average of five missed work or school days per month.**¹⁰

When considering policy solutions, a 2018 study from the Connecticut Center of Economic Analysis concluded that \$1 in diaper aid increased a family’s income by \$11 because families were able to gain and maintain work.¹¹

Did you know?

At our two crisis nurseries in Rockford and Bloomington, Brightpoint collected and provided over 117,408 diapers in FY2023 to families in the community. That number is nearly double the diapers we provided the previous fiscal year.

The health implications of diaper insecurity

Diaper insecurity is a medical and health issue for infants and toddlers. A lack of access to clean diapers is associated with more visits to a healthcare provider for both diaper dermatitis (diaper rash) and urinary tract infections (UTIs).¹² These issues can lead to longer-term, expensive health complications. **A 2019 study found that clean diapers from a diaper bank saved families \$1,448 a year in medical costs.**¹³

It is not just children whose health is impacted by diaper insecurity. Parents experiencing diaper insecurity for their child must sacrifice their own health needs to afford diapers.¹⁴

- **28 percent** of households reported having to cut back on spending for other personal hygiene products.
- **28 percent** of adults reported skipping meals themselves to conserve money.
- **35 percent** of adults reported reducing food and grocery costs.

“Can we pay this bill? Can we keep this on? Or can we get him diapers? It’s a real issue for my family.”

– BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

What do caregivers do to cope with diaper insecurity?

Caregivers face a difficult set of choices when they experience diaper insecurity. One of the most pressing burdens is what to do when they are approaching their last diaper without money to purchase more until their next paycheck. Some caregivers facing diaper insecurity will cut spending on other basic expenses to ensure they have diapers for their children. Some caregivers will leave a dirty diaper on a child longer, potentially leading to skin or urinary tract infections. Other caregivers may use alternate supplies like t-shirts or garbage bags to substitute for clean diapers. Caregivers may stay home more so that they can leave their child undiapered, leading to social isolation for caregivers and children alike. All these decisions and lack of ideal options are significant stressors for caregivers trying to ensure the health and well-being of their young children.

10 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 12). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

11 Carstensen, F., & Gunther, P. (2018). Better Health for Children and Increased Opportunities for Families: The social and Economic Impacts of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut (p. 12). <https://ccea.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/968/2018/05/Better-Health-for-Children-the-Social-and-Economic-Impacts-of-the-Diaper-Bank-of-Connecticut-1.pdf>

12 Sobowale, K., Clayton, A., & Smith, M. V. (2021). Diaper Need Is Associated with Pediatric Care Use: An Analysis of a Nationally Representative Sample of Parents of Young Children. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 230, 146–151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.10.061>

13 Carstensen, F., & Gunther, P. (2018). Better Health for Children and Increased Opportunities for Families: The social and Economic Impacts of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut (p. 9). <https://ccea.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/968/2018/05/Better-Health-for-Children-the-Social-and-Economic-Impacts-of-the-Diaper-Bank-of-Connecticut-1.pdf>

14 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 9-10). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf



The emotional implications of diaper insecurity

Parents often know exactly how many diapers they have left for their child and when those diapers will run out. If there is any change in how many diapers their child typically needs, like when they get sick, parents must scramble to buy or find more. This can mean a trip to the gas station or corner store, where diapers are often the most expensive.

This "diaper math" leads to added caregiver stress, which impacts their mental health and well-being. A recent survey asked about the connections between diaper insecurity and parent stress:¹⁵

- **44 percent** of caregivers felt alone.
- **53 percent** of caregivers felt judged for lacking diapers.
- **68 percent** of caregivers felt helpless.
- **70 percent** of caregivers said they felt stressed or anxious about their responsibilities as a parent.

It is no surprise that mothers experiencing diaper insecurity are more likely to report depression and anxiety.¹⁶ The added stress of diaper insecurity can lead to overloaded caregivers who feel they have limited choices for how to provide for their child's basic needs.

“It was very heartbreaking as a new mother to sit and wonder ‘Did I make the right decision? Can I really afford taking care of [my] child? Can I do this?’ There are so many other programs to assist families with children but nothing to offset the cost of diapers.”

- BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

Implications of Diaper Insecurity



FINANCIAL

- One in three caregivers report skipping a bill to afford diapers.
- The lowest 20 percent of earners spent 14 percent of their income on diapers.



HEALTH

- A lack of access to clean diapers is associated with more visits to a health care provider for diaper rash and UTIs.
- 28 percent of adults reported skipping meals themselves to conserve money.

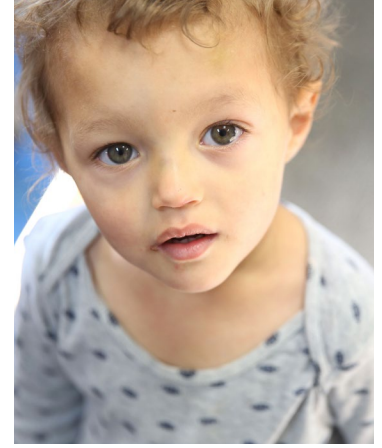


EMOTIONAL

- Caregivers who experience diaper need feel alone, judged, helpless, and anxious.
- Mothers who experience diaper insecurity are more likely to report depression and anxiety.

¹⁵ National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 11-13). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

¹⁶ Smith, M. V., Kruse, A., Weir, A., & Goldblum, J. (2013). Diaper Need and Its Impact on Child Health. *Pediatrics*, 132(2), 253-259. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-0597>



When financial stress leads to a child welfare response

The stress of providing for children with limited resources can overload parents and lead to an interaction with the child welfare system. According to the most recent data, **93 percent of children placed in foster care in Illinois were removed from their families due to neglect.**¹⁷ And often, neglect is a compounding set of poverty-related issues. A 2015 study found if a family experiences at least one material hardship, they are three times more likely to be investigated for neglect.¹⁸

Economic policy can reduce child maltreatment.

There is a significant body of evidence that anti-poverty policies can impact child maltreatment.

- One study found states that increased their Earned Income Tax Credit benefits saw fewer reports of neglect.¹⁹
- Another study found an increase in income from the Earned Income Tax Credit is associated with a decrease in involvement in the child welfare system for low-income, single parent households.²⁰
- States with flexible supports like subsidized child care for children involved in child welfare have lower rates of child removals.²¹
- Mothers earning low incomes were less likely to be reported for neglect within a 12-month period after receiving subsidized child care.²²

Reducing the impacts of economic shocks, like diaper insecurity, can meaningfully reduce a family's likelihood of interacting with the child welfare system.

The Child Tax Credit Reduced Child Poverty

When the Child Tax Credit benefit increased in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 30 percent decrease in the child poverty rate. These monthly benefits paid to a larger pool of families of low income kept more than 3 million children out of poverty.*

* Parolin, Z., & Curran, M. A. (2022). Sixth child tax credit payment kept 3.7 million children out of poverty in December. Poverty and Social Policy Brief, 6(1). <https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/publication/monthly-poverty-december-2021>

“You ask any parent, what does a baby really need? I think the first thing they will tell you is love, and that will quickly be followed by milk and diapers.”

– DR. JENNIFER RANGLES,
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
AT FRESNO STATE UNIVERSITY,
APPEARING ON THE
AHLQUIST AGENDA PODCAST

17 Williams, S. C. Rosenberg, R., & Martinez, V. (2023, April 27). State-level data for understanding child welfare in the United States – Child Trends. Child Trends. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states>

18 Yang, M.-Y. (2015). The effect of material hardship on child protective service involvement. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 41, 113–125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.05.009>

19 Kovski, N. L., Hill, H. D., Mooney, S. J., Rivara, F. P., Morgan, E. R., & Rowhani-Rahbar, A. (2022). Association of State-Level Earned Income Tax Credits With Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment, 2004–2017. *Child Maltreatment*, 27(3), 325–333. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559520987302>

20 Berger, L. M., Font, S. A., Slack, K. S., & Waldfogel, J. (2017). Income and Child Maltreatment in Unmarried Families: Evidence from the Earned Income Tax Credit. *Review of economics of the household*, 15(4), 1345–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-016-9346-9>

21 Meloy, M. E., Lipscomb, S. T., & Baron, M. J. (2015). Linking state child care and child welfare policies and populations: Implications for children, families, and policymakers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 57, 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2015.07.008>

22 Yang, M. Y., Maguire-Jack, K., Showalter, K., Kim, Y. K., & Slack, K. S. (2019). Child care subsidy and child maltreatment. *Child and Family Social Work*, 24(4), 547–554. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12635>

Why Brightpoint cares about diaper insecurity

Brightpoint is passionate about ending diaper insecurity in Illinois. We see its impact every day in our work with families:

- In our home visiting programs, our home visitors regularly fill their trunks with diapers to distribute to families during home visits.
- At our five early childhood care and education centers, we serve caregivers with limited incomes as they work to support their families. Our child and family centers provide diapers during the day, but we also have to partner with diaper banks and food pantries to assist families outside of the time their children spend at our centers.

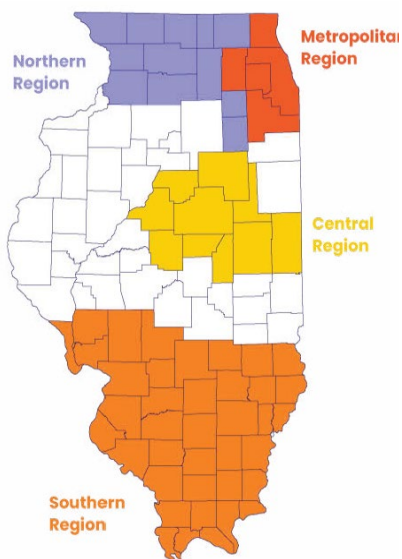
Our core belief is that the greatest asset a child has is their family. Family stress and the inability to afford diapers or other basic needs should not trigger an interaction with the child welfare system. We want to ensure every family not only has the means to prevent a life-altering crisis but also the resources to thrive.

Promoting policies that reduce diaper insecurity is just a small part of our vision. We envision a system where families have the resources they need before everyday problems spiral into something more serious, and where poverty is never a reason to remove a child from their family. Reducing diaper insecurity is one crucial step toward replacing child welfare services with solutions centering the well-being of children and their families.

FY2023 BRIGHTPOINT'S IMPACT AT A GLANCE

29,810
children, youth &
families served

67 Counties Served



Parent Support

4,252 parents and
children



Child Welfare

5,565 adults and
children



Mental Health &
Wellness

3,579 adults and
children

In FY23, we provided ongoing services to children, youth and families in these five program areas:



Early Childhood
Care & Education
1,275 parents and
children



Youth Services
881 youth

Solutions to Diaper Insecurity

Diaper insecurity is a significant issue. It has a profound impact on children and caregivers financially, emotionally, and physically. Because diapers affect children and their caregivers in a variety of ways, it is important to have multiple policy approaches to addressing diaper insecurity.

Three essential elements of successful diaper insecurity solutions

Before looking to potential solutions, there are three essential elements any diaper insecurity solution should address:



ELIGIBILITY

How many families will benefit from this solution?

One in every two families nationally lack sufficient diapers for their infant or toddler.²³ And it is not just those with the lowest incomes: 28 percent of caregivers facing diaper insecurity reported an income between 200 percent of the federal poverty level and \$150,000.²⁴ Broadening eligibility is one way to achieve that goal. While not every caregiver facing diaper insecurity will be eligible for every solution, given the current lack of sufficient diapers for many families, it is important to equitably provide solutions for as many children and families as possible.



ACCESSIBILITY

How easy is it for eligible families to use the benefit?

Caregivers need to access the type of diapers they want at the places they regularly visit. Any solutions should avoid unnecessary barriers, such as having to go to a particular location to receive the benefit or purchase certain types of diapers. By limiting barriers like these, caregivers are more likely to utilize the provided benefit.



FINANCIAL IMPACT

Does this solution meaningfully help families afford diapers?

Solutions need to meaningfully help families afford this basic need. Helping caregivers balance the significant budgetary pressures buying diapers puts on them should be prioritized. This means for most of the proposals presented in this report, dedicated funding is needed to implement solutions to significantly reduce the diaper insecurity of Illinois families.

The following solutions are designed to tackle specific aspects of diaper insecurity as experienced by children and their caregivers. By putting forward multiple policy proposals, we encourage the General Assembly to adapt a multifaceted approach to tackling diaper insecurity.

²³ National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 2). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

²⁴ National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 8). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

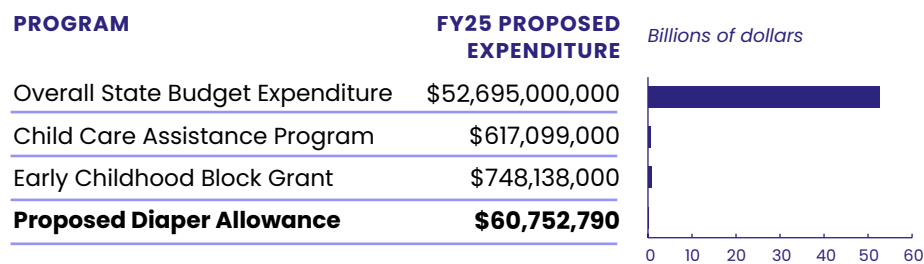
SOLUTION Diaper Allowance

“Diapers should be something next to food and health care – one of those humanitarian basics.”

– FORMER CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYWOMAN LORENA GONZALEZ²⁵

As outlined earlier in this report, diapers are essential to infants and toddlers. Just as the government has recognized the importance of social benefits like SNAP for food or Section 8 vouchers for housing, there should be a publicly-funded benefit for the purchase of diapers. A diaper allowance would provide monthly funds per infant or toddler for a parent or caregiver earning under a specific income threshold to purchase diapers.

How a Diaper Allowance Compares to Other State Expenditures:



Four states are utilizing diaper allowances to address diaper insecurity:

- In 2018, **California** approved legislation providing an additional \$30 per month per child to families with children under 36 months old on CalWORKS, California’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.²⁶ For fiscal year 2023–2024, the California Department of Social Services estimated 36,791 children would receive this benefit at a cost of \$15.6 million.²⁷
- In 2022, **Washington** passed legislation to allow families with children under the age of three and eligible for TANF or State Funded Assistance to receive additional funds to purchase diapers.²⁸ The 2023–2024 biennium budget appropriates \$17,315,000 for this program,²⁹ and rules set in August 2023 set the benefit level at \$100 per month.³⁰ The legislation became effective on November 1, 2023.³¹

25 Nichols, C. (2014, August 7). Diaper bill draws strong reactions. San Diego Union-Tribune. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/politics/sdut-ab-1515-diaper-bill-lorena-gonzalez-2014aug06-story.html>

26 California State Assembly. Assembly Bill 480. 2017–2018 Session (2017). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB480

27 California Department of Social Services. (2023, May). 2023 May Revision Estimate Methodologies (p. 65–66). <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Fiscal-and-Financial-Information/Local-Assistance-Estimates/2023-24/2023-May-Revision-EstimateMethodologies.pdf>

28 Washington State Legislature. Chapter 100 of the Laws of 2022. 2022 Regular Session (2022). <https://lawfilesex.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5838-S.SL.pdf?q=20230725085842>

29 Washington State Legislature. 2023–2024 Biennium Budget (p. 198). 2023 Regular Session (2023). <https://lawfilesex.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5187-S.PL.pdf?q=20230516172937>

30 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (2023, August 23). Permanent Rule-Making for RCW 34.05.360. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rpau/documents/103P-23-17-166.pdf>

31 Washington State Legislature. Chapter 100 of the Laws of 2022. 2022 Regular Session (2022). <https://lawfilesex.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5838-S.SL.pdf?q=20230725085842>

- In **New York**, lawmakers allocated \$33.3 million in federal Pandemic Emergency Assistance funding for a one-time diaper benefit.³² In 2022, caregivers received \$140 per child under the age of three if the child was receiving public assistance or SNAP benefits.³³
- In **Montana**, the state provides a \$40 per month diaper allowance to foster parents if the child is under the age of 3 and the department is making foster care payments for the child.³⁴

Several other states have proposed diaper allowances for families in recent years:

- Lawmakers in **New York** have put forward a more permanent diaper benefit after the one-time diaper benefit included in their Pandemic Emergency Assistance funding. The proposed legislation would provide \$80 every three months for children under the age of two receiving safety net assistance.³⁵ The bill passed the State Senate in 2021 and 2022 but failed to move in the Assembly.³⁶
- In **Massachusetts**, lawmakers proposed \$30 per month for the purchase of diapers for each dependent child enrolled with the Department of Transitional Assistance. The bill has not progressed in the legislature.³⁷
- In **Missouri**, legislators in 2021 proposed the “Personal Health Matters Act.” This would provide monthly financial assistance for period products, diapers, and incontinence products for SNAP participants.³⁸ This bill did not move in the legislature.
- In **Washington DC**, legislators introduced the Diaper Affordability and Access Act of 2022. The legislation would provide a supplemental benefit of \$100 per month to any family with a child under the age of three and receiving TANF benefits.³⁹ The legislation was amended to create a diaper bank grant program and was included in the District’s budget.⁴⁰

In Illinois, various versions of a diaper allowance have been proposed by the General Assembly over the last several years:

- During the 100th General Assembly in 2017, Representative Robyn Gabel proposed an allowance of \$80 per month for families earning under 50 percent of the federal poverty level.⁴¹
- In 2018, former Representative Melissa Conyears-Ervin proposed an allowance of \$30 per month for families earning under 50 percent of the

MOD Collective

The MOD Collective, named after the creator of the disposable diaper Marion Donovan, is one of our partners in ending diaper insecurity in Illinois. They have been leading efforts in the city of Chicago in the creation of a Diaper Dollars Pilot Program. Participants in the pilot program were given \$40 a month on an electronic debit card to purchase diapers that worked at various grocery and retail stores throughout the city. The pilot serves as a guide that Illinois can use to design a diaper allowance program, such as the \$1 million proposal Governor Pritzker advanced in February, that is both impactful and accessible to families.

32 New York Legislature. Aid to Localities Budget (S2503C) (p. 624). 2021 Session (2021). <https://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2021/S2503C>

33 New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. (n.d.). PANDEMIC EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE – DIAPER PAYMENT. <https://otda.ny.gov/policy/gis/2022/22DC018-Attachment-A.pdf>

34 Montana Secretary of State. (n.d.). FOSTER CARE SUPPORT SERVICES, DIAPER ALLOWANCE. <https://rules.mt.gov/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=37%2E50%2E505>

35 New York Legislature. S1210. 2023–2024 Session (2023). <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/S1210>

36 New York Legislature. S63. 2021–2022 Session (2021). <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S63>

37 Massachusetts Legislature. H.225. 193rd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (2023). <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H225>

38 Missouri Senate. SB531. 101st General Assembly – 1st Regular Session (2021). https://www.senate.mo.gov/21info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=58901957

39 Council of the District of Columbia. Diaper Affordability and Access Act of 2022. <https://lms.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/48832/Introduction/B24-0669-Introduction.pdf>

40 Council of the District of Columbia. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Support Act of 2022 (p. 77–78). https://lms.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/49079/Signed_Act/B24-0714-Signed_Act.pdf?Id=144357

41 Illinois General Assembly. House Bill 3895. 100th General Assembly (2017). <https://ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=3895&GAID=14&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=105881&SessionID=91&GA=100>

federal poverty level.⁴² That legislation was most recently carried in 2023 by then–Representative Lakesia Collins, now a State Senator.⁴³

- In 2022, Senator Karina Villa proposed an allowance of \$70 per month for families earning under 100 percent of the federal poverty level.⁴⁴ That legislation was reintroduced in 2023 and did not advance.⁴⁵

In 2024, Senator Lakesia Collins is sponsoring diaper allowance legislation, SB3162, that would provide families earning under 100 percent of the federal poverty level \$70 per month for diapers per child under the age of 3.⁴⁶

According to data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), 96,434 children would qualify under Senator Collins' proposal, and it would cost the state approximately \$60.7 million.⁴⁷

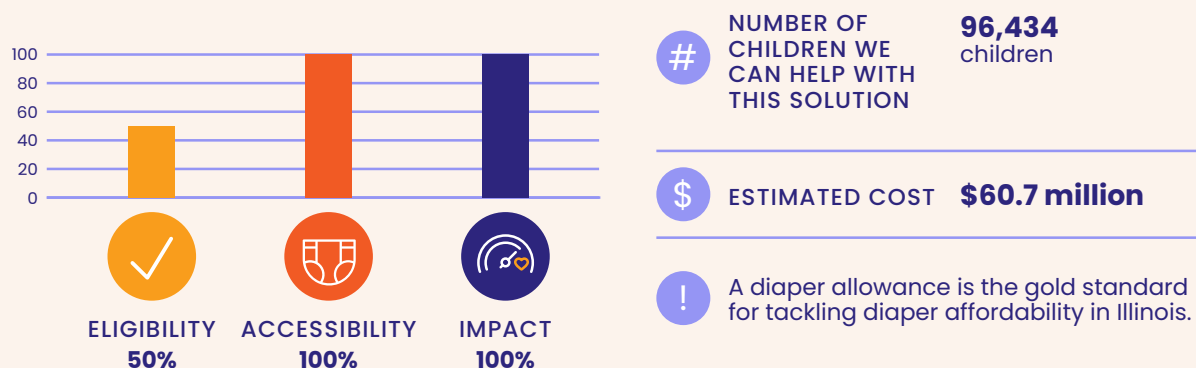
A diaper allowance is the gold standard for addressing diaper affordability in Illinois because:

- A diaper allowance will **increase eligibility** for families who need diapers most by setting a household income threshold for families with children under age three.
- An allowance is **broadly accessible** – Families would be able to purchase diapers where they usually buy them.
- An allowance is **financially impactful** – Dedicated funds per month specifically to purchase diapers provides significant financial relief for families with limited financial means.

SOLUTION

Diaper Allowance (as proposed in SB3162)

Provides direct resources to those families who need assistance the most.



⁴² Illinois General Assembly, House Bill 4826. 100th General Assembly (2018).

<https://ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=4826&GAID=14&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=110177&SessionID=91&GA=100>

⁴³ Illinois General Assembly, House Bill 1347. 103rd General Assembly (2023). <https://ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=1347&GAID=17&GA=103&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=143498&SessionID=112>

⁴⁴ Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 3461. 102nd General Assembly (2022). <https://ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?GA=102&DocTypeID=SB&DocNum=3461&GAID=16&SessionID=110&LegID=138383>

⁴⁵ Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 1294. 103rd General Assembly (2023). <https://ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=1294&GAID=17&GA=103&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=145543&SessionID=112>

⁴⁶ Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 3162. 103rd General Assembly (2024). <https://ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=3162&GAID=17&GA=103&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=152426&SessionID=112>

⁴⁷ Brightpoint analysis of IECAM 2023 data. IECAM data can be accessed from <https://db.iecam.illinois.edu/>

SOLUTION

Funding Early Childhood Providers to Provide Diapers to Families

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in Illinois provides access to affordable child care through subsidies to families of low income so they can continue to work or attend school and provide for their families. As of March 2022, there were 24,713 children under the age of three enrolled in the program.⁴⁸ In Illinois, families enrolled in CCAP must earn under 225 percent of the federal poverty level to qualify initially and can earn up to 275 percent of the federal poverty level to maintain eligibility.⁴⁹ In addition to income eligibility, caregivers must be working or in an educational program unless they are in an identified priority category. CCAP-subsidized child care payments can be utilized in center-based and home-based settings and caregivers sometimes share the cost with the program on a sliding scale depending on their incomes.

While CCAP helps families access affordable child care, families can still be turned away from their early childhood care and education center if they do not provide the necessary diapers for their child. When this happens, it forces caregivers to make alternative arrangements or stay home with their child.

A 2023 study by the National Diaper Bank Network of caregivers experiencing diaper insecurity found one in four avoided child care due to a lack of diapers. This resulted on average in five days of missed work or school per month.⁵⁰ Conversely, a 2018 study from the University of Connecticut found that for every \$1 in diaper aid a received from the Diaper Bank of Connecticut, the personal income for that family increased by \$11.⁵¹

Head Start, the free federal early childhood education program for low-income families earning under 100 percent of the federal poverty level, already requires programs to supply diapers. Head Start programs are contractually obligated to use program funds to provide diapers and formula during the program day.⁵² However, no such requirement exists for CCAP, or any other state program funded through the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) or the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) program.⁵³

“He had an ear infection and so he was on antibiotics... so he had used more than I had allocated for the week. He blew through them, no pun intended, literally we had 20 dollars between us [for diapers]. I had forgotten I had this gift card in my wallet and so we were able to get an extra packet of diapers and it was not the usual brand we get and it gave him a rash.”

– BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

48 Illinois Department of Human Services. (2023). Illinois Annual Child Care Report FY2022. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=151810>

49 Illinois Department of Human Services. (2023). 01.02.01 – Income Guidelines, 2023-07-01. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=152276>

50 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Check 2023 Executive Summary (p. 12). https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NDBN-Diaper-Check-2023_Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf

51 Carstensen, F., & Gunther, P. (2018). Better Health for Children and Increased Opportunities for Families: The social and Economic Impacts of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut (p. 12). <https://ccea.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/968/2018/05/Better-Health-for-Children-the-Social-and-Economic-Impacts-of-the-Diaper-Bank-of-Connecticut-1.pdf>

52 US Department of Health and Human Services (2023). Head Start Regulation 1302.42(e)(1). <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-42-child-health-status-care>

53 National Diaper Bank Network. (n.d.). Federal Issues. National Diaper Bank Network. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/federal-issues/>

A lack of diapers should not prevent a child from accessing the benefits of the early childhood care and education system in Illinois. **In 2024, Representative Joyce Mason is sponsoring legislation that would require the Illinois Department of Human Services to establish add-on rates for CCAP providers to purchase diapers for families who need them. Providers would no longer be allowed to turn away children due to a caregiver’s inability to provide diapers.** According to recent research, the per-unit cost of a diaper is 21 cents.⁵⁴ If all 24,713 CCAP enrolled children under three⁵⁵ attend their childcare provider full-time, the proposed diaper subsidy would cost the state just over \$3.1 million.⁵⁶

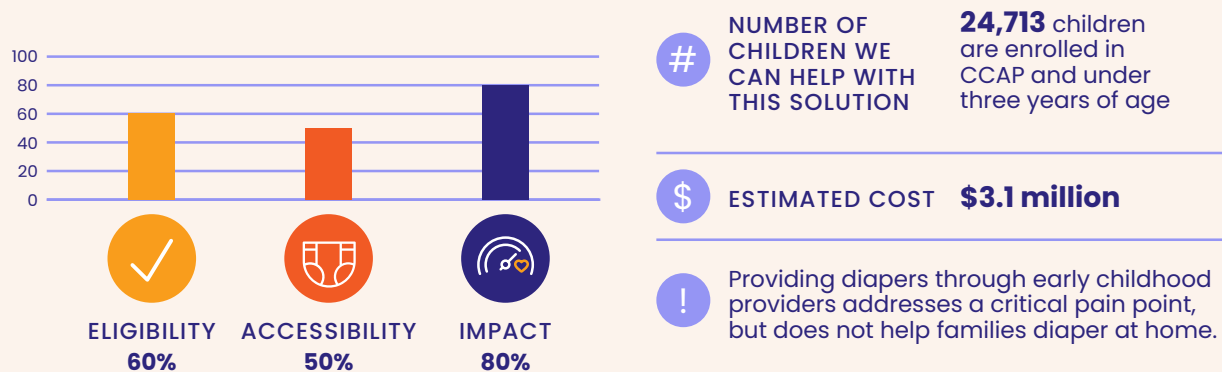
Funding early childhood providers to provide diapers:

- Will increase **eligibility** – Families who are eligible for CCAP could benefit from receiving diapers from early childhood care and education providers.
- Has **accessibility** issues – The only access point for this benefit would be early childhood care and education providers receiving CCAP. Additionally, other organizations and providers report that families who are in deep poverty are less likely to access subsidized early childhood services. Thus, they would be unlikely to utilize this benefit.
- Provides medium **financial impact** – Funding early childhood care and education providers to provide diapers clearly serves the need of ensuring caregivers do not miss work or school when they run out of diapers. However, it will not help caregivers who qualify but whose children do not attend a subsidized provider or during times when the child is not at their early childhood center.

SOLUTION

Funding Early Childhood Providers to Provide Diapers to Families

Greatly reduces or eliminates diaper insecurity being a barrier for child care access



⁵⁴ Scheltens, L. (2023, February 24). Why is everything getting so expensive? Vox. <https://www.vox.com/videos/2023/2/24/23613892/inflation-prices-rising-explained>

⁵⁵ Illinois Department of Human Services. (2022). Illinois Annual Child Care Report FY2022. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=151810>

⁵⁶ \$0.21 per diaper * 50 diapers per child per month * 12 months per year * 24,713 children enrolled in CCAP under 3 = \$3,113,838

SOLUTION Maximizing Medicaid Dollars

Medicaid is the primary program providing comprehensive health care coverage and other resources to more than 90 million people with lower incomes in the United States.⁵⁷ **Just under 40 percent of children under six in Illinois are enrolled in Medicaid or another means-tested insurance option, as compared to 20 percent of all Illinois residents.**⁵⁸ Due to its reach, Medicaid could be a critical tool to combat diaper insecurity and its health impacts.

Reducing diaper insecurity could lead to health cost savings to families and the healthcare system by reducing emergency room visits related to urinary tract infections (UTIs). **Pediatric UTIs are the third leading primary cause of rehospitalization after birth for Medicaid enrollees.**⁵⁹ And according to a 2006 study, half of the children hospitalized for UTIs were on government-supported insurance.⁶⁰ **Considering the average patient was hospitalized for three days at a total cost of \$3,838,⁶¹ reducing diaper insecurity can reduce Medicaid expenditures over time.**

Reducing diaper insecurity can also be a critical tool in Medicaid's role of improving the social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are "the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."⁶² **A 2016 study found social determinants of health accounted for 47 percent of the county level variation in health outcomes.**⁶³ In January 2021, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a letter identifying opportunities for states to better address social determinants of health under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and to support states with improving outcomes and lowering costs by addressing the social determinants of health.⁶⁴ States now have the ability to use Medicaid waivers to better address these issues.

What about diapers for older children and adults?

We know there are other populations, such as older children with medical needs and adults, who require diapering supplies. However, in Illinois, diapers are covered for families through Medicaid for individuals over the age of four with a medical need. We're focusing our efforts on infants and toddlers because there are currently very few options available to them.

57 Rudowitz, R., Burns, A., Hinton, E., & Mohamed, M. (2023, June 30). 10 Things to Know About Medicaid. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-medicaid/>

58 Brightpoint analysis of 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimates for Table B27007 – Medicaid/Means-tested Public Coverage by Sex by Age. The data can be accessed at <https://data.census.gov>

59 Forrester, A., Smith, M. & Stolfi Alfano, J. (2021). Diaper Need and its Link to Maternal Mental Health and Medicaid Spend (p. 7). https://www.cga.ct.gov/ph/med/related/20190101_Women%20&%20Childrens%20Health%20Committee/20210308/Diaper%20Bank%20of%20CT%20Presentation.pdf

60 Spencer, J. D., Schwaderer, A., McHugh, K., & Hains, D. S. (2010). Pediatric urinary tract infections: an analysis of hospitalizations, charges, and costs in the USA. *Pediatric Nephrology*, 25(12), 2469–2475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00467-010-1625-8>

61 Spencer, J. D., Schwaderer, A., McHugh, K., & Hains, D. S. (2010). Pediatric urinary tract infections: an analysis of hospitalizations, charges, and costs in the USA. *Pediatric Nephrology*, 25(12), 2469–2475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00467-010-1625-8>

62 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). Social Determinants of Health. Healthy People 2030; Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

63 Whitman, A., De Lew, N., Chappel, A., Aysola, V., Zuckerman, R., & Sommers, B. (2022). Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts (p. 2). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf>

64 Whitman, A., De Lew, N., Chappel, A., Aysola, V., Zuckerman, R., & Sommers, B. (2022). Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts (p. 11). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf>

For example, Minnesota utilizes a Medicaid waiver to provide housing stabilization services to certain individuals that are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.⁶⁵ North Carolina has a waiver to offer specific social determinant of health interventions to participants who meet at least one health risk factor and one social risk factor. For example, if a participant is at risk for food insecurity, the program can provide delivery of a healthy food box.⁶⁶

Medicaid already allows for the purchase of diapers for older children. For instance in Illinois, Medicaid can provide incontinence supplies to those age four and over with a documented medical need.⁶⁷ While incontinence supplies are covered via Medicaid in other states for children as young as two and a half years old, in all instances the child must have a documented medical condition for Medicaid to be eligible.⁶⁸

Tennessee is one state where Medicaid may soon be used to cover diapers for infants and younger children. In 2023, Governor Bill Lee announced that TennCare, Tennessee’s version of Medicaid, would become the first state in the nation to pay for diapers for the first two years of a child’s life. Families with children under five are eligible for TennCare if their family income is less than 147 percent of the federal poverty level.⁶⁹ In his State of the State speech announcing the measure, Lee said:

“In addition, Tennessee has the opportunity to ease one of the biggest financial burdens on mothers. We are going to propose covering the cost of diapers during the first two years of a baby’s life for mothers on TennCare. If approved, Tennessee will be the first Medicaid program in the nation to implement this kind of support.”⁷⁰

The Medicaid waiver Tennessee filed with the federal government states TennCare will provide 100 disposable diapers per child per month to TennCare recipients two and under. The benefit will be available through pharmacies, as “pharmacies will ensure access for individuals who need diapers closer to real-time and at the point-of-sale, thus limiting potential delays in accessing diapers when a child may need them the most.”⁷¹ The estimated cost for this program is approximately \$27.5 million.⁷²

65 Whitman, A., De Lew, N., Chappel, A., Aysola, V., Zuckerman, R., & Sommers, B. (2022). Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts (p. 11). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf>

66 Whitman, A., De Lew, N., Chappel, A., Aysola, V., Zuckerman, R., & Sommers, B. (2022). Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts (p. 11). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf>

67 National Diaper Bank Network. (2022). Medicaid Diaper Chart. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Medicaid-Chart-Diapers-Final.pdf>

68 National Diaper Bank Network. (2022). Medicaid Diaper Chart. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Medicaid-Chart-Diapers-Final.pdf>

69 Norris, L. (2023, November 3). Tennessee and the ACA’s Medicaid expansion. [Healthinsurance.org. https://www.healthinsurance.org/medicaid/tennessee/](https://www.healthinsurance.org/medicaid/tennessee/)

70 Office of the Tennessee Governor (2023). 2023 State of the State Address. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/sots/2023-state-of-the-state-address>

71 Smith, S. (2023, November 13). TennCare III Demonstration (Project No. 11-W-00369/4), Amendment 5 (p. 8). <https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/tn-tenncare-iii-pa-11132023.pdf>

72 Smith, S. (2023, November 13). TennCare III Demonstration (Project No. 11-W-00369/4), Amendment 5 (p. 18). <https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/tn-tenncare-iii-pa-11132023.pdf>

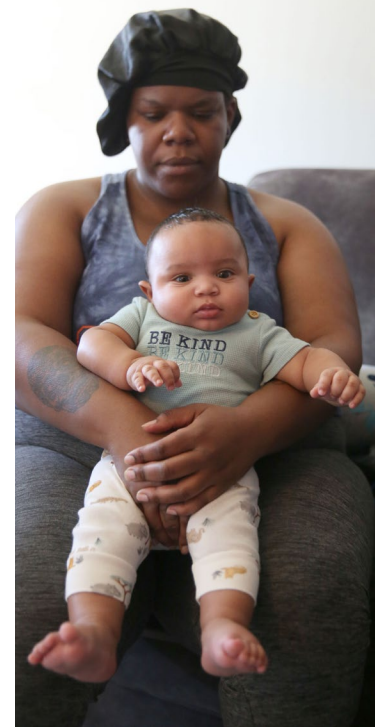
Tennessee can potentially provide diaper benefits this way because they are the only state with a modified block grant for their Medicaid funding. A block grant is a fixed pot of money the federal government gives to states to provide funding for services.⁷³ However, in Illinois and every other state, Medicaid is distributed through an entitlement structure, in which anyone who is eligible for benefits can receive them, and funding automatically adjusts when there is an increased need. Medicaid advocates generally reject the block grant structure. As Michele Johnson, Director of the Tennessee Justice Center, said: “No other state has sought a block grant, and for good reason. It gives state officials a blank check and creates financial incentives to cut health care to vulnerable families.”⁷⁴ If Illinois were to propose a similar waiver, the state would need to assess how this aligns with current Medicaid delivery as an entitlement program.

Other states have also proposed legislation that recognizes the role diapers can play in better health outcomes for children and their families and how Medicaid could be a vehicle for reducing diaper insecurity:

- In **California**, a budget subcommittee approved language in May 2023 requesting the Department of Health Care Services explore options for their Medicaid program to apply for a waiver that would provide reimbursement for diapers for children and report back on those options.⁷⁵
- In **Connecticut**, legislation was proposed in 2023 to require the Commissioner of Social Services to amend the Medicaid state plan to provide for diapers for children receiving Medicaid to the fullest extent under federal law.⁷⁶ After pushback from the Department of Social Services on the proposal’s feasibility, the legislation was amended to create a taskforce to review how Medicaid funding can be used to respond to health-related social needs, including diaper insecurity, food insecurity, and transportation. The legislation passed the House but did not pass the Senate.⁷⁷

Certain state Medicaid plans also provide diapers as a benefit to plan members:

- In **Illinois**, CountyCare, a Medicaid health plan available to residents of Cook County, mails a coupon every month for a free pack of diapers for children under two if the child is up to date on their vaccines.⁷⁸
- In **Delaware**, the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance piloted a program which provided food, diapers, and wipes to postpartum mothers for eight weeks after the birth of their child.⁷⁹



“It gets to the point where I’m paying \$100–150 a month and it hurts the wallet sometimes. It’s a strain sometimes wondering “Have I bought enough? Am I gonna be short at the end of the month? If I buy cheaper ones, are they going to give him diaper rash?”

– BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

73 The Problems with Block-Granting Entitlement Programs. (2017, February 17). Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/the-problems-with-block-granting-entitlement-programs>

74 Galewitz, P. (2021, January 9). Trump Officials Approve Tennessee’s Controversial Request To Revamp Medicaid Funding. Virginia Public Media. <https://www.vpm.org/2021-01-09/trump-officials-approve-tennessees-controversial-request-to-revamp-medicaid-funding>

75 California Legislative Analyst Office. (2023, September). Supplemental Report of the 2023–24 Budget Act (p. 8). <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2023/4803/supplemental-report-2023.pdf>

76 Connecticut General Assembly. Raised Bill 6587. January Session (2023). <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/TOB/H/PDF/2023HB-06587-R00-HB.PDF>

77 Connecticut General Assembly. Substituted House Bill 6587. January Session (2023). <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/FC/PDF/2023HB-06587-R000726-FC.PDF>

78 CountyCare. (2023, February 28). Welcome to Brighter Beginnings by County Care (p. 3). https://countycare.com/wp-content/uploads/BrighterBeginnings_Updated_2.28.2023_web.pdf

79 Delaware Health and Social Services. (2023, April 1). Diamond State Health Plan Section 1115 2022 Annual and 4th Quarterly Report (p. 10). https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dmma/files/de_dshp_q4_annual_report_2022.pdf

- In **New Mexico**, participants enrolled in Presbyterian Health Plan who complete their prenatal and postpartum appointments are offered several rewards to choose from, including diapers for infants and toddlers.⁸⁰
- In **Virginia**, Optima Health, a Medicaid provider, offers parents 400 free diapers per pregnancy if they complete their prenatal and postpartum visits.⁸¹ Aetna, another Medicaid provider in Virginia, offers new moms \$25 per month in over-the-counter personal care and baby products through the child's first year.⁸²

If Illinois wants to pursue utilizing Medicaid to tackle diaper insecurity, there are two potential paths. If Tennessee's Medicaid waiver application is approved by the federal government, Illinois can investigate what steps it would take to replicate it. Illinois could also follow Connecticut's lead, forming a working group to look at how state health plans can better respond to the social needs of Medicaid participants.

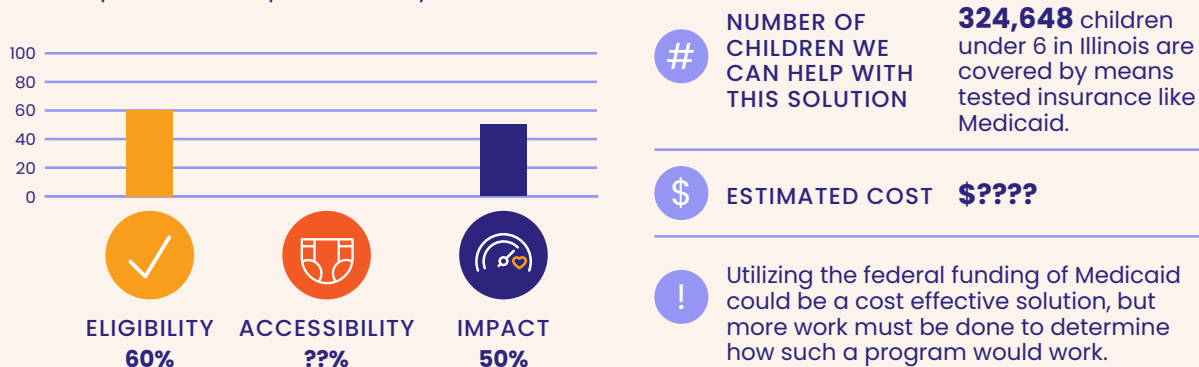
Utilizing Medicaid to address diaper insecurity:

- Provides a range of **eligibility** – Children under 18 are eligible for Medicaid in Illinois with family income levels up to 147 percent of the federal poverty level. Pregnant parents are eligible for Medicaid with family income levels up to 213 percent of the federal poverty level and remain eligible until their child turns one.⁸³
- Has potential **accessibility** issues – Because this idea is untested, it is unclear how families would receive diapers through Medicaid. Pharmacies have the potential to make this benefit accessible if Tennessee's program is successful.
- Can be **financially impactful** – Providing diapers through Medicaid can reduce the financial burden of diaper insecurity for families. Additionally, due to the Federal match rate of Medicaid, some of the costs to the State would be covered by the Federal government.

SOLUTION

Maximizing Medicaid Dollars

Leverage federal Medicaid dollars to address the public health consequences of diaper insecurity.



80 New Mexico Human Services Department. (2022). Value Added Services Comparison Chart and Detail (p.2). <https://www.hsd.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2022-VAS-Comparison-Chart-and-VAS-Detail-2.pdf>

81 Optima Health. (2023). Added Benefits for Medicaid. <https://www.optimahealth.com/plans/medicaid/added-benefits>

82 Aetna Better Health of Virginia. (2023). Extra support for new moms. <https://www.aetnabetterhealth.com/virginia/new-moms.html>

83 Norris, L. (2023, November 3). Illinois and the ACA's Medicaid expansion. [Healthinsurance.org. https://www.healthinsurance.org/medicaid/illinois/](https://www.healthinsurance.org/medicaid/illinois/)

SOLUTION Eliminate or Reduce the Diaper Tax

Sales taxes are inherently regressive because everyone is charged the same rate regardless of their income. Therefore, those with lower incomes spend a greater percentage of their income on taxable goods than those with higher incomes. In response, states have reduced or eliminated their sales tax on basic needs such as groceries, diapers, and period products. **As of October 4th, 2023, 38 states do not tax groceries,⁸⁴ 29 states do not tax period products,⁸⁵ and 24 states do not tax diapers.⁸⁶**

In Illinois, legislators eliminated the tax on period products in 2016.⁸⁷ Illinois administers a one percent tax on food, drugs, and medical appliances.⁸⁸ Governor Pritzker has included an elimination of the state grocery tax in his proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget. Unfortunately, diapers are considered a paper product and thus not included in the proposal. **Therefore, since 2019, in addition to paying 32 percent more for diapers,⁸⁹ families are paying a 6.25 percent state sales tax on every pack of diapers purchased.** According to estimates prepared in 2015, reducing the diaper tax in Illinois would decrease state revenues by \$10 million.⁹⁰

Since 2013, Illinois has had 18 different proposals by 12 different members of the Illinois General Assembly to eliminate or reduce the tax on diapers and associated products. None of those efforts were successful, although two passed the State Senate in 2018 and 2019. Appendix A contains a full listing of the proposals.

Other states have successfully enacted legislation reducing or eliminating taxes on diapers. As mentioned earlier, 24 states no longer have sales tax on diapers, including some state changes:

- In 2022, **Florida** passed a bill to create a one-year tax holiday for basic needs items for babies.⁹¹ In 2023, legislation exempting basic needs items such as diapers was made permanent.⁹²
- As of August 5th, 2022, sales of diapers are exempt from **Indiana's** gross retail tax.⁹³



“Some months it’s easier than others. Generally, we do our diaper buying at the beginning of the month. He’s a big boy so he’s in size 5 right now, so the larger sizes you get, the less diapers you get in the boxes so it’s expensive.”

– BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

84 Washington, K. (2023, July 5). The “Food Tax”: Grocery Tax by State. Kiplinger.com. <https://www.kiplinger.com/taxes/states-that-still-tax-groceries>

85 Alliance for Period Supplies. (2023). Tampon Tax. <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/tampon-tax>

86 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). Diaper Tax. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/diaper-tax/>

87 Illinois General Assembly. Senate Bill 2746. 99th General Assembly (2016). <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.aspx?DocNum=2746&GAID=13&DocTypeID=SB&SessionID=88&GA=99>

88 Illinois Department of Revenue. (2023). What are the retailers’ occupation and use tax rates in Illinois? Where can I find a list of these rates? <https://tax.illinois.gov/questionsandanswers/answer.139.html>

89 Scarpino, M. (2023, August 16). Parents struggle to afford basic baby needs as diaper prices continue to rise. FOXBusiness. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/economy/parents-struggle-afford-basic-baby-needs-diaper-prices-rise>

90 Hellmann, J. (2015, February 6). Illinois lawmaker wants to cut tax on diapers, baby wipes. Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/ct-diaper-tax-20150206-story.html>

91 WTXL Digital Staff (2022, July 1). Diapers, toddler and infant clothing are tax free, beginning July 1 in Florida. WTXL ABC27 Tallahassee News. <https://www.wtxl.com/news/local-news/diapers-toddler-and-infant-clothing-are-tax-free-beginning-july-1-in-florida>

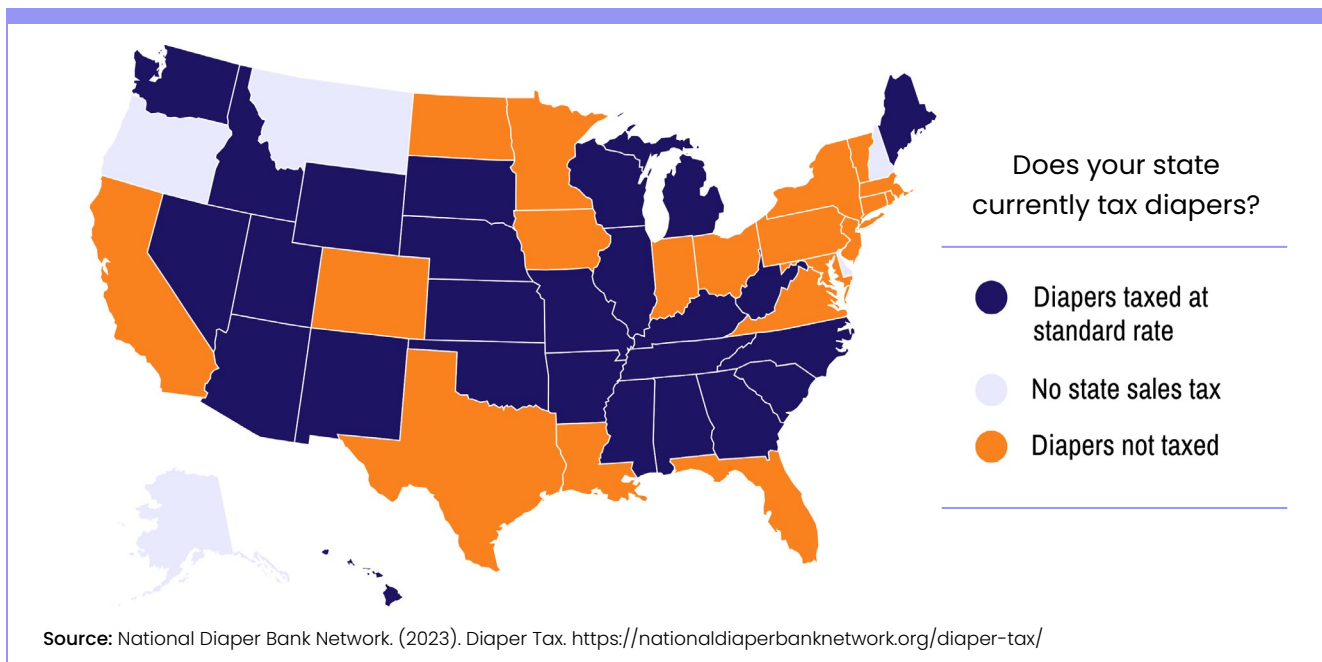
92 Plasencia, A. (2023, June 30). Certain baby items getting permanent sales tax exemption in Florida. FOX 13 Tampa Bay. <https://www.fox13news.com/news/certain-baby-items-getting-permanent-sales-tax-exemption-in-florida>

93 Voss, C. (2022, August 9). Indiana Governor Signs Additional Automatic Taxpayer Refund Bill. Thomson Reuters. <https://tax.thomsonreuters.com/news/indiana-governor-signs-additional-automatic-taxpayer-refund-bill/>

- As of January 1st, 2023, **Iowa** no longer charges sales tax on diapers.⁹⁴
- As of June 30th, 2023, **North Dakota** no longer collects tax for child or adult diapers.⁹⁵
- As of September 1st, 2023, **Texas** no longer collects sales tax on diapers and wipes.⁹⁶
- As of October 1st, 2023, **Ohio** has a sales tax exemption for diapers.⁹⁷

A full list of the states who eliminated taxes on diapers are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sales Tax on Diaper Purchases by State



Thirteen other states have active proposals under consideration by their state legislature to eliminate the diaper tax. Appendix B contains a full description of proposed bills.

94 The Iowa Legislature. Senate File 2367. 2022 Legislative Session (2022). <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=89&ba=SF2367>

95 Gill, E. (2023, June 11). N.D. governor signs bill exempting child and adult diapers from sales taxes. Williston Herald. https://www.willistonherald.com/news/state/n-d-governor-signs-bill-exempting-child-and-adult-diapers-from-sales-taxes/article_3af93c82-e9ed-11ed-8aa2-3b91987ab7ce.html

96 Madden, M. (2023, July 31). Texas will soon eliminate sales tax on diapers, menstrual care. KXAN. <https://www.kxan.com/news/texas-politics/texas-will-soon-eliminate-sales-tax-on-diapers-menstrual-care/>

97 Sales Tax Institute. (2023, July 30). Ohio Adds Exemptions for Child and Baby Products Effective October 1, 2023. <https://www.salestaxinstitute.com/resources/ohio-adds-exemptions-for-child-and-baby-products-effective-october-1-2023>

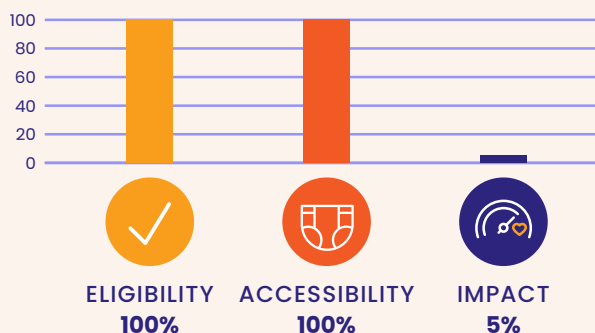
Eliminating or reducing the sales tax on diapers:

- Maximizes **eligibility** – any family who purchases a pack of diapers would see a benefit.
- Maximizes **accessibility** – any diaper purchased in Illinois would be eligible for the reduced or eliminated tax at any point of purchase.
- Has a minimal **financial impact** – The National Diaper Bank Network estimates families can purchase two additional diapers per month per percentage point decrease in the sales tax.⁹⁸ A recent article estimated the average Illinois family will pay approximately \$79.52 in diaper taxes throughout the year.⁹⁹ While every dollar saved for a family is important, the other solutions discussed can have a greater impact on a family’s budget.

SOLUTION

Eliminate or Reduce the Diaper Tax

Reduce or eliminate the tax on this basic need.



NUMBER OF CHILDREN WE CAN HELP WITH THIS SOLUTION **589,877** children are under 3 in Illinois

\$ ESTIMATED COST **\$10 million**

! It is morally imperative we do not tax basic needs such as diapers, however the impact to a family is minimal at best.

98 National Diaper Bank Network. (2023). Diaper Tax. <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/diaper-tax/>

99 Washington, K. (2023, August 14). States That Still Tax Diapers. Kiplinger.com. <https://www.kiplinger.com/taxes/state-diaper-taxes>

SOLUTION**Use State Dollars to Increase Diaper Distribution**

States can also provide grants to organizations already distributing basic needs items to expand their capacity to include diapers. While there are several diaper banks in operation in Illinois, they do not have the capacity to serve the entire state both in terms of supplies as well as the geography they cover. **According to a 2020 study, diaper banks address just under 4 percent of the estimated diaper insecurity nationally, and 1.3 percent of the estimated diaper insecurity in Illinois.**¹⁰⁰ Grants could be made available by the state to many types of community-based organizations like crisis nurseries, food pantries, diaper banks, and other established community groups to expand their capacity to support basic needs distribution in their communities.

The federal government is piloting this approach. In September 2022, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched the Diaper Distribution Demonstration and Research Pilot.¹⁰¹ The pilot provides grant funding to states through community action agencies that partner with diaper banks and other existing diaper distribution programs to provide diapers for families.¹⁰² The HHS pilot has distributed a total of \$24 million to 18 states and three tribal entries to assist with the purchase and distribution of diapers.¹⁰³

- In **Arizona**, families making less than 230 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for 150 free diapers per month for every child in their household. The diapers are distributed via their local community action agency.¹⁰⁴
- In **Jones County, Iowa**, families who participate in a local home visiting program are eligible for free diapers for an entire year.¹⁰⁵

Illinois has applied several times for funding through this pilot but has not been awarded the funding.

Individual states and localities are also using their own budgeting authority to provide grants to improve diaper distribution in their states.

- In 2021, **California** included in their budget \$30 million over three years to eight organizations to purchase diapers for low-income families.¹⁰⁶



“I hope that someday there may be a time where support is out there for families. It would mean so much to know that there is a voucher or a subsidy that you can depend on at least once a month to offset the cost and the burden of diapers alone.”

– BRIGHTPOINT PARENT

100 Massengale, K. E. C., Comer, L. H., Austin, A. E., & Goldblum, J. S. (2020). Diaper Need Met Among Low-Income US Children Younger Than 4 Years in 2016. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(1), 106–108. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2019.305377>

101 Covert, B. (2022, September 28). For the First Time, the Federal Government Will Help Poor Families Get Diapers. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/diaper-need-hhs-pilot/>

102 Administration for Children and Families. (2022, September 27). OCS DCL-2022-19 OCS Launches First-Ever Federal Diaper Distribution Pilot. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/policy-guidance/ocs-dcl-2022-19-ocs-launches-first-ever-federal-diaper-distribution-pilot>

103 Administration for Children and Families. (2023). Diaper Distribution Demonstration & Research Pilot. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/diaper-distribution-pilot>

104 Wildfire. (2023). Arizona Diaper Distribution Pilot Program. <https://wildfireaz.org/find-help/arizona-diaper-pilot-program/>

105 YPN. (2023). 3DRP – Diaper Distribution Demonstration & Research Pilot. https://www.jonescountyiowa.gov/files/children_services/ypn_home_visits_3drp_24018.pdf

106 California State Assembly. AB180 – Budget Act of 2021. 2021-2022 Session (2021). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20210220AB180#95ENR

- In **Colorado**, lawmakers appropriated \$2 million to the Department of Human Services to implement a diaper distribution program in 2021.¹⁰⁷ Colorado's 2023 budget maintains the program's funding.¹⁰⁸
- **Georgia** used \$1.2 million of Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) funds to help families with young children purchase diapers.¹⁰⁹
- In **Indiana**, the state is using \$4 million from TANF to fund a pilot program for the Indiana Diaper Bank to distribute 200 diapers per month to WIC participants.¹¹⁰
- In May 2023, **Minnesota** legislators approved \$1.098 million for a diaper distribution grant program.¹¹¹ The director of the Diaper Bank of Minnesota estimated they can distribute 250 percent more diapers because of this grant.¹¹²
- In **Michigan**, legislators provided \$4.4 million in TANF money for diaper assistance program grants.¹¹³



PROFILE: Alex Goodfellow

Alex has been the Executive Director of Share our Spare, which provides essential items to young children in the Chicagoland area, since 2020. In this interview lightly edited for length and clarity, Alex talks about what Share our Spare does and why she is passionate about ending diaper insecurity.

Describe the day-to-day work of the diaper bank.

Because we operate in an active warehouse, every day looks a little different. There are a lot of moving parts from receiving inventory and hosting volunteers to supporting agency partners as they 'shop' for needed items.

How does diaper insecurity impact your community?

Diaper insecurity is a hidden consequence of poverty – one that most people are surprised to learn about. This consequence, however, impacts the daily livelihood of families and health of our youngest neighbors. While it sounds so simple, an adequate supply of diapers can impact a family's economic security, employment, and access to early childhood education.

Why are you passionate about ending diaper insecurity in Illinois?

I believe deeply in providing children with an equitable start to life. The zip code, income, race and education of caregivers should not be such a detrimental factor in a child's trajectory and at the heart of it, diaper insecurity is an equity issue. Whether the prohibiting factor is access or cost, a child deserves the right to have their basic needs met and Share Our Spare is here to remove those barriers and ensure a strong start to life.

107 Colorado General Assembly. SB21-027. 74th General Assembly, First Regular Session (2021). <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb21-027>

108 Colorado General Assembly. 2023 Budget – Human Services Operating Budget (p. 17). (2023). https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023A/bills/2023a_hum_act.pdf

109 Collins, L. (2023, July 21). The 'power and hope' in diapers. Deseret News. <https://www.deseret.com/2023/7/21/23791125/diapers-expensive-shortage-diaper-bank-poverty>

110 Downard, W. (2023, September 7). State project aims to give diapers to safety net recipients. <https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2023/09/07/state-project-aims-to-give-diapers-to-safety-net-recipients/>

111 Minnesota Revisor of Statutes. S.F. No. 2995 (p. 564-565). 93rd Session (2023). https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=SF2995&version=4&session_year=2023&session_number=0&format=pdf

112 Longworth, N. (2023, May 25). Minnesota donates diaper funding to help families in need. FOX9 KMSP. <https://www.fox9.com/news/minnesota-donates-diaper-funding-to-help-families-in-need>

113 Michigan Legislature. House Bill 5783 (p. 183). 101st Legislature (2022). <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2021-2022/publicact/pdf/2022-PA-0166.pdf>

- In 2021, **Washington** legislators allocated \$5 million over two years in the state budget to provide grants to diaper banks for the purchase of diapers, wipes, and other essential baby items.¹¹⁴ The funding was maintained in Washington’s most recently passed budget.¹¹⁵
- **San Francisco** created the first city-funded diaper bank. It allows all city residents receiving public benefits to access free diapers.¹¹⁶
- **San Mateo County in California** created a \$50,000 pilot program to have monthly diaper and wipe distribution events at two local libraries.¹¹⁷

The following states and localities are proposing grant programs to fund the purchase and distribution of diapers:

- **Massachusetts** is proposing the creation of a Diaper Benefit Pilot Program. The state would issue a request for proposal for programs wishing to acquire diapers, store diapers, distribute diapers, or organize diaper drives.¹¹⁸ The legislation has not moved.
- **Nebraska** legislators proposed \$1.5 million for a grant program for either diaper banks or community distribution centers to expand their reach.¹¹⁹ The legislation has not moved.
- **Pennsylvania** legislators introduced legislation to create a grant program increasing access to child and adult diapers. Diaper providers would receive grants in amounts between \$2,500 and \$25,000.¹²⁰ The legislation has not moved.

Where is the federal government on all of this?

In addition to the federal pilot program and additional appropriations advocacy, there are several ongoing efforts to expand diaper access in Congress.

- **The End Diaper Need Act of 2023**, led by Barbara Lee (D – CA) and Rose DeLauro (D – CT) in the House and Tammy Duckworth (D – IL) and Kevin Cramer (R – ND) in the Senate, would provide \$200 million to expand diaper access nationwide and make diapers a qualified expense through health savings accounts.
- **The Improving Diaper Need Act of 2023**, led by Bonnie Watson Coleman (D – NJ), Barbara Lee (D – CA) and Rose DeLauro (D – CT), would make diapers a qualified expense through health savings accounts and prohibit state and local sales tax on diapers.

114 Washington State Legislature. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5092 (p. 73). 2021 Regular Session (2021). <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5092-S.PL.pdf?q=20210428145030>

115 Washington State Legislature. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5187 (p. 56). 2023 Regular Session (2023). <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5187-S.PL.pdf?q=20230516172937>

116 San Francisco Human Services Agency. (2022, April 29). San Francisco First in the Nation to Offer Free Diapers to all Families on Public Benefits. <https://www.sfhsa.org/about/announcements/san-francisco-first-nation-offer-free-diapers-all-families-public-benefits>

117 San Mateo County Libraries (2023, November 16). San Mateo County Libraries Launches Free Diaper Program. <https://smcl.org/news/san-mateo-county-libraries-launches-free-diaper-program/>

118 Massachusetts Legislature. S.104. 193rd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (2023). <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S104>

119 Legislature of Nebraska. Legislative Bill 676. 108th Legislature – First Session (2023). <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/108/PDF/Intro/LB676.pdf>

120 General Assembly of Pennsylvania. House Bill 229. Session of 2023 (2023). <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2023&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=0229&pn=0190>

There are several ways which Illinois could use its budget strength to increase the distribution of diapers statewide. One potential solution is to establish a program where organizations receive grants to purchase diapers for distribution within their communities. This way the state can build on the already existing systems providing basic needs to families and also potentially expand diaper distribution to other communities.

Another potential avenue to increase diaper distribution is to leverage the state’s purchasing power to buy massive quantities of diapers at low costs. This is how larger diaper banks operate, by working directly with a diaper manufacturer to purchase pallets of diapers. However, this would require the state to build a system to both store the purchased diapers and then distribute those diapers, essentially having the state function as a diaper bank.

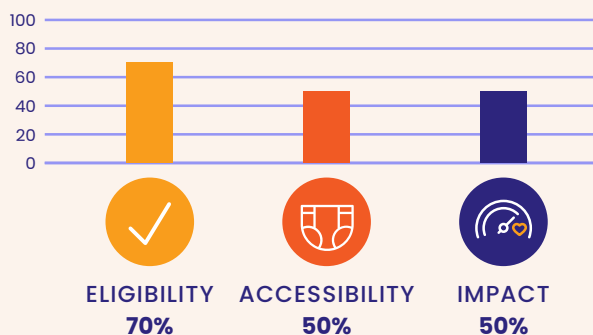
Using state dollars to increase diaper distribution:

- More families may be **eligible** – Community agencies will have more resources to distribute diapers, but families in areas without community agencies would see no impact.
- Provides limited **accessibility** – Diapers would only be available through previously established distribution channels. Current infrastructure does not meet demand nor cover the majority of the state geographically.
- Has medium **financial impact** – More families will be able to access clean diapers, although families who are not connected with a community agency would see no impact.

SOLUTION

Use State Dollars to Increase Diaper Distribution

Expand basic need distribution capacity in Illinois through existing networks



NUMBER OF CHILDREN WE CAN HELP WITH THIS SOLUTION
 ????

It is unclear how many families utilize non-profits in Illinois to access diapers.

\$ ESTIMATED COST \$????

! Grants would help community organizations provide for their community, but those organizations alone can not end diaper insecurity.

The Path Forward for Eliminating Diaper Insecurity in Illinois

The Governor's recent inclusion of a diaper program in his proposed budget is a great first step in recognizing the impact diaper insecurity has on a young family. This \$ 1 million proposal presents the General Assembly with an opportunity to amplify the Governor's work and build momentum toward a multifaceted approach to eliminating diaper insecurity in Illinois.

The General Assembly can follow the Governor's lead by:

- Supporting the Governor's \$1 million diaper program in the budget.
- Passing diaper allowance legislation so families can receive direct assistance to purchase diapers (SB3162 – Collins)
- Allocating additional dollars to Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for providers to purchase diapers when needed for families who attend their programs and eliminate the ability of CCAP providers to turn families away when they run out of diapers
- Creating a grant program for community providers already distributing basic needs to receive additional financial resources to distribute diapers.
- Investigating how to utilize federal Medicaid dollars to address diaper insecurity as a public health crisis.

There are steps you can take to ensure Illinois becomes a national leader in tackling diaper insecurity. If you are a part of an organization that works with young children or their caregivers, we strongly urge you to become involved in our advocacy efforts. And for individuals, legislators need to hear directly from you on why diaper insecurity is an important issue for legislators to address this year. By raising our collective voices in support of children and families, we can truly ensure every family has an opportunity to thrive in Illinois.

APPENDIX A

List of Bills to Reduce or Eliminate the Diaper Tax in Illinois since 2013

YEAR	BILL NUMBER	SPONSOR	ITEM(S)	BILL PROGRESS
2013	SB2848	Sandoval	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2015	SB61	Sandoval	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2015	SB2672	Frerichs	Child sized and adult sized diapers	Did not move
2015	HB3210	Mussman	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2017	HB3600	Greenwood	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2018	SB2881	Aquino	Condoms, incontinence supplies, diapers, wipes	Passed Senate
2019	HB2498	Greenwood	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2019	HB3568	Conyears-Ervin	Condoms, incontinence supplies, diapers, wipes	Did not move
2019	SB1858	Aquino	Condoms, incontinence supplies, diapers, wipes	Passed Senate
2021	HB1828	Greenwood	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2021	HB2387	Mason	Diapers, breastfeeding supplies, and infant formula	Did not move
2021	HB3999	Stuart	Condoms, incontinence supplies, diapers, wipes	Did not move
2022	HB4381	Jacobs	Diapers and wipes	Did not move
2022	SB4057	Villivalam	Diapers, wipes, infant formula	Did not move
2023	HB3059	Vella	Diapers (fully exempt)	Did not move
2023	HB3475	Rashid	Diapers	Did not move
2023	HB3670	Mason	Diapers and infant formula	Did not move
2023	SB171	Villivalam	Diapers, wipes, infant formula	Did not move

APPENDIX B

Additional States with Diaper Tax Proposals

STATE	DESCRIPTION
Alabama	Legislation to exempt the purchase of diapers and period products from the sales and use tax
Arkansas	Ballot initiative to remove period products and diapers from the state sales tax
Georgia	Legislation to eliminate the 4 percent sales tax on diapers
Hawaii	Legislation to exempt diapers from the state's general excise tax
Kentucky	Legislation to exempt diapers from a six percent sales tax.
Missouri	Legislation exempting diapers and period products passed the Missouri Senate but died in the House
Nebraska	Legislation would prohibit sales and use tax from being collected on diapers
New Mexico	Legislation would include child diapers as medical devices and thus not taxed.
North Carolina	Legislation would exempt diapers and period products from sales taxes
South Carolina	Legislation would eliminate the sales tax on diapers, period products, and toilet paper.
Tennessee	Legislation would eliminate the sales and use tax on infant diapers, wipes, and formula.