

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor
California State Capitol
Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dr. Anthony Rendon
State Assembly Speaker
California State Capitol
Suite 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Kevin de León
State Senate President pro Tempore
California State Capitol
Suite 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown, Speaker Rendon and President Pro Tempore de León,

We write to express our strong support of Assembly Bill 480 (Gonzalez Fletcher) and the corresponding budget proposal, which will provide relief to tens of thousands of low-income families with young children experiencing unmet diaper need in California.

Unmet diaper need causes severe but preventable health consequences for infants and toddlers, posing significant costs to the state, and creates barriers to childcare and employment that affect the entire family. One in three mothers in the United States experiences unmet diaper need. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, California is home to 36% of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, despite only having 10% of the nation's population. This makes the statewide percentage of parents experiencing unmet diaper need even higher. Diapers for one child can cost up to \$100 per month, accounting for *14% of the monthly budget of families in the lowest income quintile*. Without sufficient diapers, parents cannot drop off their children at childcare centers and go to work, furthering the cycle of poverty.

One of the most serious outcomes of unmet diaper need is the devastating health consequences. When families lack enough diapers to keep babies clean and dry, they often resort to waiting longer between changes, using old clothing, or even reusing soiled diapers. In 2015, more than 14,500 cases of diaper dermatitis were treated in California hospitals, along with more than 19,000 cases of urinary tract infection and thousands of cases of related conditions for children age three and younger. Additionally, a study by Yale researchers published in the academic journal *Pediatrics* concluded that "an insufficient supply of diapers is not only a risk factor for poor infant health and child health, but also for maternal mental health." It further stated that "an adequate supply of diapers may prove a tangible way of reducing parenting stress, a critical factor influencing child health and development."

AB 480 seeks to address these significant consequences by clarifying existing law to explicitly include diapers as a reimbursable ancillary expense through the supportive services available to families enrolled in California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), California's TANF program. A simultaneous budget item seeks to allocate funding for these diapers as an ancillary expense.

At the federal level, HR 1143, the *Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act of 2017* authored by Representative Keith Ellison, would make federal grant funds available for states to create, administer and evaluate innovative programs that provide access to one of the most basic needs of every infant and toddler: clean diapers. These bills represent harmonious efforts to close the unmet diaper need gap for low-income families. We should make California the model by funding and passing AB 480.

California could present a replicable solution for a start to addressing diaper need that the nation could follow.

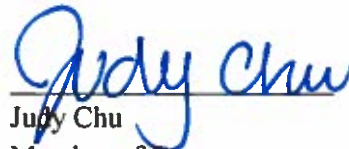
Unmet diaper need contributes to a cycle of poverty for low-income families. If parents do not have enough diapers they will not have access to childcare, and inability to access childcare is the number one barrier to work. However, unmet diaper need is a problem we can solve in California. We hope you will support this legislation and budget proposals to address unmet diaper need without delay.

Cc: Phil Ting, State Assembly Budget Chair
Holly J. Mitchell, State Senate Budget Chair
Chad Mayes, State Assembly Minority Leader
Jean Fuller, State Senate Minority Leader

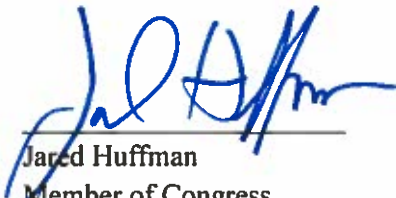
Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



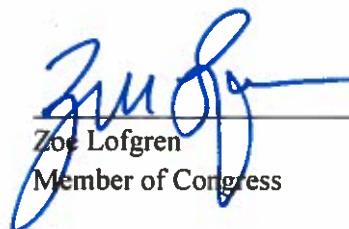
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Anna Eshoo
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Zoe Lofgren
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Tony Cárdenas
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