



AB 492: Diaper Supplement for Eligible CalWORKs Families.

IN BRIEF

AB 492 would offer a monthly \$50 supplement per child age 2 or younger to parents enrolled in CalWORKs who also qualify for the childcare benefit.

THE PROBLEM

Diapers are a daily necessity. For too many families, the monthly cost of purchasing diapers ranges from \$72 to \$100 per child¹ and creates a barrier to financial stability. Despite being critical to the health and hygiene of young children, diapers are excluded from state and federal assistance such as CalFresh, the Women Infant and Children program (WIC), and Medi-Cal.

Barriers to Employment

When diapers are unaffordable, their cost creates a barrier between parents and gainful employment. Among the many reports identifying the lack of affordable childcare as a top barrier faced by parents when attempting to enter or remain in the workforce, a study available through the National Institutes of Health has also found the lack of child care to be the number one barrier to work². This is why childcare is available to parents in CalWORKs, California’s Welfare-to-Work program. However, childcare providers require parents to provide a full day’s supply of diapers on top of enrollment costs.

For low-income parents trying to stay employed or in school, diaper need can be an everyday crisis. Not being able to leave a toddler at childcare because of insufficient diaper supply can disrupt a parent’s work activity plan, possibly resulting in sanctions by the county. CalWORKs is intended to help families become financially self-sufficient and reduce reliance on public assistance, but with daily potential pitfalls such as transportation challenges and diaper supply, it is easy to see how the high price of diapers could have a big cost to the success of CalWORKs.

The Hidden Cost of Diaper Need

Missing child care due to diaper need is also a loss for the child themselves and for California’s future workforce. The opportunity to participate in early education more than doubles a child’s likelihood to go on to higher education.³

It is documented that families living month-to-month and struggling with necessary expenses are put in the position of changing their children’s diapers less often than needed due to a lack of diaper supply.⁴

Dirty diapers can cause painful rash, skin infection, blisters, and urinary tract infections, all of which are shown to be responsible for many pediatric office and emergency department visits on an annual basis.⁵ More medical visits increase costs for the family and the use of subsidized care such as Medi-Cal. Inadequate diapering can also spread viruses and bacteria in public places.

A 2013 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 also states that “an adequate supply of diapers may prove a tangible way of reducing parenting stress, a critical factor influencing child health and development.”

THE SOLUTION

AB 492 helps solve the problem of diaper need for those already working hard to make their family economically stable. It will address a top barrier to entering a staying in the workforce for parents who want to maintain their CalWORKs plans: access to childcare.

Providing a monthly \$50 supplement to be used only on diaper purchases would be making a small investment in the overall success of the CalWORKs to help keep thousands of families on track.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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¹ Low estimate: Dr. Raver, C. et al., “Huggies Every Little Bottom Study: Diaper need in the U.S. and Canada” (2010). And, <http://www.babycenter.com/baby-cost-calculator>. High estimate: <http://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/diapergap.html>

² Youngblut, JoAnne M. et al. “Factors Influencing Single Mother’s Employment Status.” *Health Care for Women International* (2000). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2792579>

³ UC Berkley Center for Labor Research and Education, *Economic Impacts of Early Care and Education in California*, 2011. Via the NationalDiaperBankNetwork.org

⁴ Smith MV., Kruse A., Weir A., Goldblum J. “Diaper Need and Its Impact on Child Health.” *Pediatrics* 2013; *Vol. 132 No. 2 253-259*. Published online July 29, 2013.