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Richard Fleischer  
President  
Project Undercover  
1 Selkirk Road  
Cranston, RI 02909

Dear Mr. Fleischer:

Thank you for contacting me regarding H.R. 4055, the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act. I appreciate hearing your thoughts on this issue, and I welcome the opportunity to correspond with you.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Office of Family Assistance provides short-term financial relief to families in need through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under TANF, states receive block grants designed to help families achieve self-sufficiency. Currently, more than 980,000 infants and toddlers receive TANF assistance. For families with infants and toddlers – which represent approximately one third of enrollees – purchasing diapers can be an overwhelming financial burden. The average monthly diaper bill is approximately 70 dollars, and for many families, this expense can account for up to 15 percent of the cash assistance they receive from TANF.

In Rhode Island, a family of three can be eligible for up to \$554 per month, or \$6,648 per year, in cash assistance under TANF. With Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, the family's income is still 30 percent below the federal poverty level. For these families, diapers can account for 10 percent of their TANF assistance, and add a heavy financial strain. The availability of diapers for families living below the poverty line is a serious public health issue.

To address these concerns, Representative Keith Ellison introduced H.R. 4055, the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act of 2015. H.R. 4055 would provide grants to states to create diaper demonstration and distribution programs. States would be eligible to apply for grants to provide sufficient diapers and diapering supplies to each participating family so that each eligible child in the family receives 100% of diapers that he or she would need for the month. The assistance would come in the form of cash assistance, coupons, or supplies through home visiting programs, resource centers, health clinics or community centers. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of H.R. 4055, which awaits consideration in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Thanks you again for your thoughtful comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me about other pressing issues as the legislative session continues.

Sincerely,

  
Jim Langevin