

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CHAMPLAIN VALLEY



DIAPER BANK

To: Sen. Ginny Lyons, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Welfare

Cc: Sen. Cheryl Hooker
Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale

From: Amanda Herzberger
Charity Clark
Diaper Bank Committee
Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV)

Re: S. 198, an act relating to the Diaper Need Working Group

Date: February 8, 2022

In connection with our testimony on S. 198, we offer the background information below. In addition, we have attached testimonials from seven of our agency partners as well as the annual statewide diapers and wipes budget of the Junior League of Champlain Valley Diaper Bank.

History of the JLCV Diaper Bank

The Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV), affiliated with the Association of Junior Leagues International (AJLI), is a group of women committed to civic leadership and promoting and perpetuating social change for Vermont communities. The geographic scope of our mission is designed to extend only to communities in the Champlain Valley region. JLCV is not practically designed to serve all counties statewide, nor would such a geographic scope be permitted by AJLI.

<https://champlainvalley.jl.org/diaper-bank>

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In 2018, JLCV established Chittenden County’s first diaper bank and began distributing diapers to local food shelves from its South Burlington headquarters. In January 2019, the JLCV Diaper Bank became the first Vermont bank affiliated with the National Diaper Bank Network. **The JLCV Diaper Bank is 100% volunteer operated.**

“Diaper Need” in Vermont

“Diaper Need” impacts one in three U.S. families and the wellbeing of our country’s babies and toddlers. Before the JLCV Diaper Bank was established, Burlington’s Feeding Chittenden reported that 6-10 people per day requested diapers, a need that Feeding Chittenden could not meet. It can cost up to \$75 per month to diaper a child and no state or federal safety-net program allocates dollars for the purchase of diapers. Without diapers, infants and toddlers cannot attend childcare or participate in early childhood education—and without childcare, parents cannot attend work or school.

According to the National Diaper Bank Network, 43% of births in the state are covered by Medicaid. Every day in every county in Vermont, families are experiencing diaper need.

JLCV Diaper Bank Furnishing Food Shelves and Parent-Child Centers With Diapers Statewide

Due to the increased challenges facing families statewide due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the JLCV Diaper Bank worked to temporarily expand its scope statewide. **The volunteers of the JLCV Diaper Bank stretched themselves from a 2019 distribution of about 100,000 diapers in three counties to more than 1.3 million diapers in 13 out of 14 counties since the start of the pandemic.** It became clear that the diaper need experienced in Chittenden County that inspired us to start the JLCV Diaper Bank is a perpetual problem that exists statewide.

Financial Support of the JLCV Diaper Bank

JLCV received \$50,000 in 2020 and \$82,000 in 2021 of CARES Act funding from the Vermont Legislature to support its expanded distribution statewide. The Diaper Bank has also received generous grants from The Hoehl Family Foundation, Target’s Community Engagement Funds, and the Northfield Savings Bank Community Giving Program. These funds have been used to purchase, store, and distribute diapers to Vermont babies and toddlers in need across the state. In anticipation of the question, what is the cost of providing diapers statewide, we have attached a very basic spreadsheet.

However, the JLCV Diaper Bank was never built to support statewide service. By the end of this year, this additional support will be depleted, and, without intervention by the Legislature, the JLCV Diaper Bank will be forced to discontinue service beyond the Champlain Valley region and reduce the number of diapers provided to partners within that region. This will leave families served by over 60 local agencies without diapers.

S.198, An act relating to the Diaper Need Working Group

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Members of JLCV have continuously networked with stakeholders to devise a solution to the problem of diaper need in Vermont. **What we have learned is while all stakeholders readily agree that diaper need is an urgent problem, there is no consensus as to a solution.** Possible approaches include:

- Allocating more dollars to families receiving funds through Reach-Up or WIC. For example, the State of California's CalWorks program provides \$30/month to federal grant recipients with children under 3;
- Spinning off the JLCV Diaper Bank as a separate, adequately funded non-profit that could serve counties statewide, similar to the Vermont Foodbank;
- Providing financial support to the Vermont Foodbank to utilize their distribution network to direct a diaper program; or
- A multi-pronged approach that combines elements of these.

Ideally, the stakeholders could identify and agree on one statewide solution to diaper need. Absent that consensus, however, the JLCV proposes the establishment of a working group to create space for the dialogue and further education needed to achieve a unifying recommendation to the Legislature.

Testimonials

We have attached testimonials from agency partners who receive diapers through the JLCV Diaper Bank so that you may read about the impact felt by Vermonters who, without our assistance, would likely be going without diapers for their children. One individual mother was interviewed on NECN last summer, and that video can be found [here](#).

Conclusion

A Diaper Need Working Group would create space for a dialogue about the best solution for diaper need in Vermont so that stakeholders can present a unified solution to the Legislature. **Without legislative intervention, by the end of this year, deliveries of diapers to low-income families outside of the Champlain Valley region will end and operations in the Champlain Valley will be scaled down to pre-pandemic levels.**

Attachments

<https://champlainvalley.jl.org/diaper-bank>

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DIAPER BANK

Testimonials

The Diaper Bank has been a godsend to Lund families. They work closely with us to make sure our clients have what they need while they engage in treatment. This program helps to remove financial barriers for families who are working hard to improve their lives and those of their children. We are so grateful for this important partnership.

- Tricia Coates, Lund Family Center

Previous to our discovery of the Champlain Valley Diaper Bank we only had sporadic donations of diapers for our clients and only a random few sizes which no-one could count on. Today we have a good supply of all sizes from newborn to toddler and our shoppers are really starting to count on this. Diapers are expensive and not covered by any assistance programs, so the Diaper Bank has made a huge difference for our clients with children in diapers. Thank you

- Peter Leonard, Randolph Food Shelf

I can definitely say that our diaper bank has been utilized by a good majority of our community. In the last 6 months SAPCC has given out over 2000 diapers and given out close to 5000 diapers total in 2021. We have families that constantly come weekly and have made it clear that without our help they would be stuck. The diaper bank is truly under played when it comes to really acknowledging the worth of the program and should truly get more praise and funding!! It affects our community daily!

- Kayla Bapp, Springfield Area Parent Child Center

The Chittenden Asylum Seekers Assistance Network (CASAN) is so grateful for the generosity of the Champlain Valley Junior League's Diaper Bank. Because asylum seekers can not access any

federal government assistance, they are truly dependent on the support of community members as they navigate the asylum-seeking process. This is where the Diaper Bank is so vital. Money saved by purchasing diapers can be used for housing and living expenses so desperately needed. Many asylum seekers will eventually earn work authorization papers, but until they can be financially independent, they depend on the services provided by our community. We are thankful for the support of the Champlain Valley Junior League in helping us welcome new families to Vermont.

- Kim Watkin, CASAN

The diaper bank has been an enormous source of support to the refugee and immigrant families that we serve at the Association of Africans Living in Vermont. Parents of young children who are living on very low incomes walk into our office daily. Being able to provide them with free diapers from the diaper bank allows them to buy more food for their families that week or to meet other needs that their family has. Thank you so much for being there!!

- Jessica Story, MSW, Association of Africans Living in Vermont

As you know, these past years have been particularly challenging to folks we serve and the need is great to help ensure that they can access concrete supports. Each month, I drive to South Burlington to the Junior League of Champlain Valley Diaper Bank and fill my car with diapers, wipes and pull ups, that I bring back to the Family Center diaper pantry. We are happy to get these out to not only the families we serve, but also share with community partners like CVHHH and Plainfield Health Center. The collaboration with our community partners, helps to ensure that we meet the needs of everyone struggling to make ends meet in our community.

- Sue Dellipriscoli, Family Center of Washington County

I am a family advocate at Capstone Community Action Head Start in Barre Vermont. Our agency established what we call an Essential Closet in the fall of 2021. The purpose of the closet is to be able to provide families with “essentials” that they are unable to purchase or access on their own. The Diaper Bank has enabled us to make diapers and wipes available in our Essentials Closet to the 54 families that receive Head Start Services at The Learning Together Center, our Full day program that serves children birth through kindergarten. It’s been an amazing feeling to be able to provide diapers and wipes to our families in need. With the increasing costs of essentials like diapers, this resource takes away some of the stress for our families especially at the end of the month when their money is tight or in some cases just gone. It’s vital to find a sustainable way to continue to provide Diapers and wipes to the low-income families that we serve and support in our program.

- Stacey Lynds, Family Advocate, Capstone Community Action Head Start

**Junior League of Champlain Valley Diaper Bank
Monthly & Yearly Budget - Diapers & Wipes Only**

	Monthly Number of Diapers Needed	Price per diaper	TOTAL \$	
Newborn	4680	\$0.12	\$ 575.64	
Size 1	5600	\$0.13	\$ 705.60	
Size 2	5500	\$0.13	\$ 715.00	
Size 3	6500	\$0.15	\$ 975.00	
Size 4	13000	\$0.17	\$ 2,184.00	
Size 5	15000	\$0.18	\$ 2,685.00	
Size 6	15000	\$0.19	\$ 2,790.00	
2t-3t	5000	\$0.23	\$ 1,150.00	
3t-4t	5000	\$0.23	\$ 1,150.00	
4t-5t	5000	\$0.24	\$ 1,175.00	
Wipes			\$ 1,350.00	
Shipping			\$ 75.00	
TOTAL MONTHLY	80,280.00		\$ 15,530.24	
TOTAL ANNUALLY	963,360.00		\$ 186,683.24	