

TO: Chairman MacDonald and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: MacKenzie Nicholson, Co-Senior Director, MomsRising NH

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Thank you Chairman MacDonald and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee for allowing me to submit this testimony in favor of HB 1798, an act relative to the coverage of diapers under the state Medicaid plan. My name is MacKenzie Nicholson and I am the Co-Senior Director of MomsRising New Hampshire, an on-the-ground grassroots organization representing thousands of moms and their families across the Granite State.

New Hampshire families are doing everything “right” and still coming up short. The New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute found that median household income in New Hampshire did not cover basic costs for a four-person family in 2024, falling nearly \$2,000 short. That gap is driven by rising housing, health care and child care costs that are outpacing what families earn.¹

If a typical family earning close to \$100,000 a year is still underwater, then families with low incomes have no room for surprise costs, no margin for error and no way to “budget harder” or “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” NHFPI also found that nearly one in four New Hampshire households lacked \$2,000 in non-retirement savings in 2022, meaning a car repair, a medical bill or a broken furnace can push a family into financial crisis.²

That is the reality for the families who rely on Medicaid. Medicaid serves people with very limited income, including parents. In New Hampshire, parents and caretaker relatives generally qualify only at very low income levels, and even for adults covered through Medicaid expansion, the ceiling is still modest compared to the cost of living here. These are families trying to stay attached to work while raising babies, paying rent and keeping up with groceries, gas and utilities.

And for these families, diapers are not optional. They are a basic health need and a basic “go-to-work” need. Families cannot safely stretch diapers the way they might stretch a bag of groceries. When diapers run out, parents resort to unsafe coping strategies like delaying diaper changes. Diaper insecurity is tied to higher stress and real health impacts for babies like urinary tract infections and rashes.³

¹ New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. (October 2025). Affordability eroded: Changes to the cost of living in New Hampshire. <https://nhfpi.org/resource/affordability-eroded-changes-to-the-cost-of-living-in-new-hampshire/>

² Sletten, P. (January 5, 2026). Nearly one in four New Hampshire households lacked \$2,000 in savings for emergencies. New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. <https://nhfpi.org/blog/nearly-one-in-four-new-hampshire-households-lacked-2000-in-savings-for-emergencies/>

³ Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health. (2024, December 30). Diaper need and maternal mental health. <https://policycentermmh.org/diaper-need-and-maternal-mental-health/>

It also collides directly with child care and workforce participation. Most child care providers require families to send diapers, and research shows one in four families experiencing diaper need reported missing work or school because they did not have enough diapers for child care.⁴ When a parent cannot go to work, they lose wages, they fall further behind and they have even less money for diapers the next week. And because programs that help families, like SNAP and WIC, can't be used to purchase diapers, it becomes a loop that punishes both babies and working parents.

Diaper need is the number one material hardship contributing to maternal depression over hardships such as food insecurity and is deeply tied to maternal mental health. The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health notes that diaper need decreases a mom's maternal sense of competence and increases stress, and it cites evidence that diaper need is a leading material hardship contributing to maternal depression.⁵

Households with diaper insecurity also struggle to meet food needs. One in four moms experiencing diaper need report skipping meals to help cover the cost of diapers. Three out of four report that in the past year, they have run out of food and could not afford to buy more.⁶ When we talk about maternal and infant health, we should be honest about the daily basics that can push families into distress.

HB 1798 is a practical, targeted step toward better infant and maternal health for Granite Staters. It would mean fewer unsafe tradeoffs, fewer missed child care days and more stability during the first year of a baby's life. Diapers are essential for babies' health, parents' ability to work and families' dignity. I respectfully urge the committee to recommend HB 1798 as Ought to Pass.

⁴ See footnote 3.

⁵ See footnote 3.

⁶ National Diaper Bank Network. (January 2025). The NDBN Diaper Check 2024: Diaper insecurity among U.S. children and families.

<https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-NDBN-Diaper-Check-2024.pdf>