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Nearly half of infants and toddlers in the U.S. are living in low-income families. This means that over 5 million young children are living in families that have a hard time covering the cost of their family's basic needs, including diapers for their young children.

Diapers can cost a family around \$80 a month. According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in 2014 the poorest 20 percent of families spend 14 percent of their income on diapers. The National Diaper Bank Network estimates that overall, 1 in 3 families struggle with diaper need.

Even if these families receive assistance through SNAP or WIC, program rules prohibit using these funds for diapers. Few families receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), and for those that do, the amounts are not enough to cover diapers along with other basic needs.

Lack of clean diapers can affect the physical well-being of young children, as well as cause considerable stress for parents and guardians. According to a Yale School of Medicine study, diaper need is a stronger predictor of depression and anxiety among mothers than food insecurity.

A lack of diapers can also prohibit parents from accessing child care, since many child care providers require parents to provide clean diapers for their children. Parents and guardians who lack access to child care for their young children struggle to maintain employment and provide for their family.

Recognizing the importance of diapers, there are efforts occurring around the country to address diaper need. The National Diaper Bank Network operates over 280 diaper banks and in 2014 they distributed 36.8 million diapers to more than 1 million children.

In order to address diaper need on a national scale, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN) reintroduced legislation to create a national demonstration program for distributing diapers to eligible families.

The Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act of 2017 (H.R. 1143) will give states flexibility in developing and implementing their program. These demonstrations will reveal the best ways to help eligible families access diapers for their young children.

A national diaper demonstration program might seem like only a minor way to address the struggles of low-income families, but it has major implications. By assisting families obtain this necessity for their young children, it frees up household income and relieves a major stressor for parents and guardians, leading to improved child well-being and positive economic implications for both individual families and our society as a whole.