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Shawna Walz  
Idaho Diaper Bank  
(208) 995-6711  
Shawna@idahodiaperbank.org

### **Idaho Diaper Bank Leaders Head to Capitol Hill to Discuss Diaper Need with Idaho Congressional Delegation**

**BOISE, Idaho** – Idaho Diaper Bank Executive Director Shawna Walz will travel to Washington D.C. on May 11 - 12 as part of the National Diaper Bank Network's Lobbying Day. Diaper bank executives from around the nation will be gathering to meet with their respective congressional delegations to convey the importance of a reliable supply of diapers in improving the physical, mental and economic well-being of all infants and families. Additionally, a policy panel with speakers from Yale and Georgetown Universities, the Center for American Progress, First Focus, and the National Diaper Bank Network will convene to discuss the links between poverty and diaper need.

Currently, Congress is considering a bill that would give states the opportunity to participate in a demonstration program to distribute diapers to eligible low-income families. It is HR 4055, the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act of 2015.

Diapers are essential to a child's well-being and healthy development. Not having enough diapers can cause significant stress and mental health issues for the family. In order to safely care for their child, or enroll a toddler or infant in a childcare program while they work, parents must have a reliable supply of diapers. Without access to diapers, many families cannot work or pursue job opportunities, and their children face skin rashes and illnesses that are easily preventable.

Currently there is zero assistance to help struggling families purchase diapers. Programs designed to help families like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, commonly known as Food Stamps) or Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) program cannot be used to purchase diapers.

"A lack of diapers is often a hidden consequence of poverty. Many Idaho babies are being left in wet diapers all day, which is not only uncomfortable for a baby, but a real health risk. By giving families something as simple as a diaper, we give them a glimpse of hope and a chance to get back on track financially and hopefully, reduce overall family stress," said Walz.

"In fact, we are learning that a lack of diapers leads to maternal depression, shaken baby syndrome and increased abuse and neglect. By changing these programs to allow for the purchase of diapers and diapering materials, we can positively change the lives of babies and families."

Fifty-five percent or roughly 35,000 Idaho children under the age of three live in poverty or low-income families. One in every three Idaho families struggle to afford basic necessities, including diapers. Diapers are often rationed or reused when money is tight and every dollar is needed to go toward food and shelter. Babies and young children are paying the price.

“My hope is that our Idaho congressional delegation will listen to the facts and support the efforts of diaper banks all around the nation. Babies should not have to suffer or forgo their most basic hygiene needs because money is tight at home,” said Walz.

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*By focusing on diaper need, the Idaho Diaper Bank works to meet the basic needs of children and families. Idaho Diaper Bank was established to provide diapers, diapering supplies and advocacy to families in need through partnership agencies. These agencies serve infants and families including childcare centers, crisis nurseries, domestic violence shelters, food pantries and faith based organizations. Idaho Diaper Bank seeks to engage Idaho communities to recognize that diapers are a basic need, along with food and shelter. The Idaho Diaper Bank welcomes the donation of dollars and new or opened packages of diapers (disposable, cloth or incontinence supplies).*