Dear Health and Human Services Finance Committee Chair Matt Dean and Members:

As advocates for improving family economic stability we are writing in strong support for Amendment A17 to HF1861 that would provide resources to food shelves to purchase diapers to distribute to low-income families. This first-of-its-kind in the country funding to address the diaper need will help the 1 in 3 low-income Minnesota families that report struggling to afford diapers. Having to choose between diapers and formula or diapers and the electric bill affects all aspects of a family’s budget, children’s health and development, and parental mental health. In fact, a recent study conducted by the Yale School of Medicine found that diaper need was one of the most strongly correlated risk factors with maternal depression. Maternal depression not only affects the mother’s health and well-being but has been shown, if left untreated, to hinder children’s social, emotional and cognitive development.

There are no federal or state programs that directly address the cost of diapers for low-income families; and many work support programs such as SNAP and WIC cannot be used to buy diapers. For this reason, low-income families with young children are making tough decisions each month and often pay more per diaper because lack of adequate resources or transportation prevent them from buying diapers in bulk.

The $130,000 appropriation to food shelves to use to purchase diapers could reach all 87 Minnesota counties and result in the distribution of up to 1 million diapers per year. We urge you all to support this cost-effective, strategic approach to addressing the diaper need in Minnesota because it will improve child and family health and financial stability by using the purchasing power of bulk buying and reaching low-income families where they are already turning for help.

Sincerely,

Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota

Diaper Bank of Minnesota

National Diaper Bank Network

Hunger Solutions Minnesota

Legal Services Advocacy Project

Catholic Charities

Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC)

The Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA)

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