


<b>F R O M</b>	<b>Name &amp; Title</b>	<b>Dr. Leana Wen, Commissioner</b>	<b>Health Department</b>  <b>AGENCY REPORT</b>	
	<b>Agency Name &amp; Address</b>	<b>Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201</b>		
	<b>Subject</b>	<b>18-0232 – Diaper-Changing Amenity</b>		

**To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall**

**October 9, 2018**

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review #18-0232. This legislation would require that any new and recently renovated building have a diaper changing amenity within each bathroom.

Council Bill #18-0232 has many positive public health and equity implications. Other jurisdictions have adopted similar laws citing similar benefits. The first law to be introduced requiring universal diaper changing amenities was passed in New York City in January of 2018.<sup>1</sup> On the federal level, a more limited law, the BABIES Act, was signed into law by President Obama in 2016, making diaper changing stations mandatory in all restrooms in federal buildings, men’s rooms included.<sup>2</sup> Since the adoption of New York City’s legislation, both California and the state of New York have passed diaper changing amenities legislation.<sup>3</sup>

The New York City bill sponsor, Councilman Rafael Espinal, was quoted as saying, “After witnessing a father changing his daughter’s diaper on an unsanitary sink in a public space, I realized diaper changing stations must be a requirement in all public bathrooms, because moms and dads should have equal access to sanitary and safe spaces when changing their baby’s diapers.”<sup>4</sup> His comments reflect a 2013 Centers for Disease Control study in which it was found that “nine out of 10 fathers (90%) who lived with children under age five bathed, diapered, or dressed the children, or helped them bathe, dress, or use the toilet ‘every day’ or ‘several times a week.’”<sup>5</sup> With the knowledge that both mothers and fathers frequently share these duties, equal access to diaper changing stations is of paramount concern when addressing the gender equity issues associated with raising young children.

As mentioned by New York City Councilman Espinal, cleanliness and general sanitary conditions are also a concern for many parents with respect to diaper changing. Public restrooms potentially have between “500 to a few thousand bacteria for every centimeter squared, depending on how often [they

<sup>1</sup> Intro. 1241-A, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5738632&GUID=B2A1208E-8793-45D9-9C85-AF241C29385D>

<sup>2</sup> H.R.5147 - BABIES Act, <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ235/PLAW-114publ235.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> AB-1127, [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB1127](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1127); A09511, <https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy19/exec/fy19artVII/WAArticleVII.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/01/14/diaper-changing-stations/>

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Jo and Mosher, William D., “Fathers’ Involvement With Their Children: United States, 2006–2010,” Division of Vital Statistics; <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr071.pdf>

are] cleaned,” with these bacteria including “E. coli and salmonella,” and other “potentially dangerous bacteria like campylobacter, klebsiella, and C. diff.”<sup>6</sup> Other potential harms surround not having a secure flat surface for diaper changing, which could potentially result in injury for uncooperative young children. Given the potential harm, the potential solution of diaper changing amenities is fairly inexpensive. In the incredibly expensive New York City real estate market, Councilman Espinal mentioned very little pushback from developers and noted that “the changing tables themselves cost between \$155 and \$185... a low cost for a big benefit.”<sup>7</sup>

Altogether, BCHD believes that Council Bill #18-0232 is a pivotal step toward ensuring all parents of young children are able to share equally in their parental obligations, while also protecting the well-being of said children. For the forgoing reasons, the Baltimore City Health Department urges a **favorable report** on Council Bill #18-0232.

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<sup>6</sup> “Ecological succession and viability of human-associated microbiota on restroom surfaces,” American Society for Microbiology, <https://aem.asm.org/content/early/2014/11/10/AEM.03117-14>; “Everything You Never Wanted to Know About Public Toilets,” Women’s Health, <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/a19985012/public-bathroom-facts/>

<sup>7</sup> “New York City Just Recognized That It’s Not Only Women Who Have To Change Diapers,” Huffington Post, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/nyc-changing-table-bill\\_us\\_5a2abb0ee4b073789f6945c0](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/nyc-changing-table-bill_us_5a2abb0ee4b073789f6945c0)