



Date: March 16, 2021
To: House Education Committee, Chair Alonso Leon and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations
RE: *HB 3294 [Sanitary Products Access]*

On behalf of OEA's 41,000 members, I am delighted to testify in support of HB 3294, which will ensure statewide access and dignity to our menstruating students. This is a long-overlooked issue, and so we would like to thank the proposal's long list of co-sponsors for bringing this bill to you today.

Our members have been advocates for our students' needs in all respects: their educational access, of course, but also, our educators care about students' access to supports related to their health and safety, as well as to their wellbeing when it comes to navigating the impacts of poverty. Whether it is housing, health care, nutrition, or other life essentials, our members advocate for their students. With respect to this legislation, we were pleased to serve on an informal group that helped to shape the bill and its fine-tuning, found in the dash 1 amendments.

Providing no-cost menstrual products to our students is as essential as providing desks, chairs, books, and bathroom products such as tissue and soap. Yet, too often, sanitary products are not available. Frequently, there is a payment barrier, or the machines are empty, or no sanitary products are offered at all. This is not only an inconvenience; for some, it may constitute a health emergency, and not just for low-income students, but for any student.

A member of my own family nearly died 12 years ago from lack of access to sanitary products at school that caused her to contract toxic shock syndrome. By the time it was diagnosed, she was experiencing acute organ failure and we nearly lost her. Though medical interventions saved her life, it was a terrifying experience – one I fervently hope this bill will help to prevent for other families.

As you look to efforts great and small to make our schools both equitable and safe, please do not overlook this need. Thank you for your support of HB 3294.

