



March 14, 2021

Oregon House of Representatives  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
House Committee on Education

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Chapter of the National Organization for Women (Oregon NOW) strongly supports the passage of HB 3294 which would bring menstrual products to all public schools to end period poverty and ensure dignity for menstruating students in Oregon.

Menstruation has long-been stigmatized even though more than half of the population menstruates for about a third of their life. This stigmatization has been institutionalized in our country by means of gender-based humor, separation, and omission.

In 2016, at NOW's annual conference, the general assembly was presented a resolution on menstrual equity and a call to recognize menstrual equity as a political priority. The presenter was one of our younger Oregon NOW members, and her resolution brought about a consciousness of the institutionalized inequity in public schools, that we older members had accepted as just the way things were.

She explained that due to school violence, her urban school did not let her carry a bag or purse unless it was clear; forcing "a walk of shame" for all those who menstruate to carry their menstrual hygiene products down the hall to the restrooms. She said her schoolmates were missing school because they were out of tampons, pads, and money, and food stamps (SNAP program) won't cover period products.

Her friends were not provided equitable access to education because they could not afford to pay for menstrual hygiene products. All hygienic needs of boys were met: toilet paper, soap, running water, paper towels and bandages if they needed. This illustration of menstrual inequity elicited a unanimous passage of the resolution and brought about the NOW policy "Schools must provide menstrual hygiene products."



Menstrual equity is a basic equity issue. All young people are entitled to a free and public education that is equitable in access and quality of content. Menstrual inequity is simply another means to control women and limit their access to all possibilities and opportunities.

Oregon NOW is excited to see this “unseen” inequity challenged by Oregon House Bill 3294, The Menstrual Dignity Act and we strongly support passage of this critical Bill.

Thank you!

Respectfully,



Christine Chin Ryan  
President, Oregon NOW



H. Rebecca Callison  
Legislative Chair, Oregon NOW