

Thank for your time Members of the House Education Committee.

As a 15-year veteran teacher who has mainly worked in two school districts, both as a Wellness Coordinator and Health and Physical Education teacher, I would like to share my overwhelming and enthusiastic support for the Menstrual Dignity Act.

Menstrual products are a long overdue resource that schools should be **freely** offering to all students. I stress the word “freely.” Every school has the secret drawer full of menstrual products which forces a student to ask an adult to provide them with one product at a time. This ask perpetuates a dynamic of secrecy, shame and dependency for access to basic hygiene products. This ask then forces students to share personal and private information with adults, regardless of the students’ level of comfort.

According to a joint survey by Thinx and PERIOD The Menstrual Movement, 1 in 5 menstruators in the United States cannot afford the price of menstrual products every month and 1 in 4 teens have missed class due to a lack of access to period products. If a student must choose between attending class and therefore facing stigma or simply staying home to manage their limited access to menstrual products, **students will choose to stay home or leave school altogether in order to take care of themselves.** Students are unable to focus on learning if they are concerned about their personal hygiene or cleanliness. By supplying menstrual products, schools will support students having agency over their own bodies, increase attendance, and improve learning outcomes.

We strive to create safe, inclusive spaces for all our students. Increasingly, students are feeling safer and more comfortable expressing their gender identity. Forcing them to ask for menstrual products puts an undue expectation on our trans students to potentially and continuously “out” themselves to adults in order to meet their basic hygiene needs. And in that vein, menstrual products should be provided not only in female and gender-neutral restrooms, but in all restrooms, male included.

Schools supply toilet paper, paper towels, and other basic hygiene needs for students; menstrual products need to be included among these basic supplies. As a Health and PE teacher, I often have students opt out of class activities due to menstrual issues or leave class to go ask for permission to get their needed menstrual products. I talk to students about how lack of menstrual products is not confined to their school or communities but are challenges faced by menstruators around the world. The impact of missed school or work due to lack of menstrual products can adversely affect their quality of life and the legislature has, with this bill, a chance to positively impact a menstruators’ well-being. I encourage you to support and pass the Menstrual Dignity Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration for such an important piece of legislation.

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