



March 16, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Co-Chairs Neron and Weber, Members of the Committee,

My name is Christel Allen, representing NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon. As advocates for reproductive freedom and justice, we understand the importance of ensuring that all young people have access to both sexual and reproductive healthcare services and products and comprehensive sex education. We would like to thank Rep. Ruiz for bringing this policy forward, and we respectfully request the committee support HB 3294 to pass the Menstrual Dignity Act to provide funding that ensures all students have access to these essential products and other resources.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon works to ensure everyone in Oregon can make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, raising healthy families, and choosing legal abortion. Everyone—regardless of their circumstances—deserves the tools, healthcare services and education they need to be empowered in making these personal decisions to decide if, when and how they would like to raise a family.

While Oregon is a leader in its comprehensive sex education laws and standards, we also recognize that school districts currently receive no dedicated funding specifically for the purpose of supporting comprehensive sexual health education. People who menstruate are often unfamiliar with bodily processes, before and after they reach puberty. Youth may have misconceptions and or complex feelings about menstruation, which may cause anxiety and stress and impact their ability to learn. We need to combat myths and misinformation with nonjudgmental, age-appropriate, accurate, and accessible information. Comprehensive and continuous menstrual education is essential to increase body literacy and strengthen bodily autonomy, confidence, and self-esteem. Providing free menstrual products in schools is not only an equitable policy to support the needs of students who may not have the financial resources to purchase these products, having these products available in all facilities will also serve as a powerful education tool and will help destigmatize menstruation, and promote an inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

Adolescence is a formative period of physical and personal change and growth. Comprehensive education and access to menstruation products helps support the social, emotional, and physical changes they are experiencing, especially if they do not have access to an adult they can trust to ask questions and receive accurate information that is free of shame or stigma.

Access to information, resources, and quality health services and products is a fundamental right and should not depend on who we are, how much money we make or what gender we identify. All young people deserve to have the information they need to make safe and healthy choices. Sex education is widely supported by a majority of Americans, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Access to accurate information and health services and products not only improves health outcomes, studies have shown that it can contribute to preventing sexual violence and gender-based



discrimination, as well as improve socio-emotional wellbeing by teaching skills related to building safe and positive relationships, understanding and accepting differences, challenging bias, resolving conflict, making healthy decisions, and defining and promoting enthusiastic consent practices that empower youth to claim their right to bodily autonomy.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon supports the Menstrual Dignity Act because all youth deserve to have the knowledge and skills and resources they need to thrive. We urge your support for HB 3294.

Sincerely,

Christel Allen  
Executive Director  
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon