

---

## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 16, 2020

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of House Bill 3294, the Menstrual Dignity Act. Oregon youth deserve to have all the tools, knowledge, and resources they require to be healthy, safe, and thrive regardless of where they go to school—this includes access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, comprehensive sex education, and menstrual products.

While Oregon is a leader in comprehensive sex education laws and standards, there is no dedicated funding allocated to supporting school districts in implementing health education. An unknown number of school districts throughout the state do not fully implement the law, either by omitting sex education entirely from their curriculum, by implementing curricula that are not considered comprehensive, or by passing policies that make it challenging for sex educators to do their jobs. These gaps in health education undermine young people's ability to fully understand their bodies and the changes brought on by adolescence. Before and even after puberty, many people who menstruate are often unfamiliar with their bodily processes and hold misconceptions, as well as stress, anxiety, and shame about menstruation that can impact their ability to learn.

To build personal literacy about human physiology and strengthen bodily autonomy, confidence, and self-esteem, nonjudgmental, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate information and tools must be readily available to youth. In addition to helping to destigmatize menstruation and promote an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, providing free menstrual products in schools is an equitable policy that also supports the needs of students who may not have the financial resources to purchase these products. Period poverty is an issue in Oregon and throughout the United States—a majority of students have either missed class due to menstruation or know someone who has missed class due to menstruation. Providing menstrual products in public schools will allow menstruators to fully engage in their education, extra-curricular activities, and, for students experiencing need, critical school-based wrap-around services.

Access to information, resources, and quality health care is a fundamental right and shouldn't depend on who we are, where we live, or how much money we have. All young people deserve to have the information and resources they need to make safe and healthy choices. Comprehensive sex education is widely supported by a majority of Americans, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Studies show that comprehensive sex education programs not only improve health outcomes, they additionally help prevent child abuse, sexual violence, and gender-based discrimination. Comprehensive sex education and healthy relationship training improves socio-emotional well-being by teaching skills related to building safe and positive relationships, understanding and accepting difference, challenging bias, resolving conflict, making healthy decisions, and defining and promoting enthusiastic consent practices that empower youth to claim their right to bodily autonomy.<sup>1</sup>

An integral component of sex education is learning about our body's processes and how best to care for ourselves. Comprehensive education about and access to menstruation products without shame or stigma will help support adolescents and young adults as they navigate formative periods of physical and personal change and growth and as they pursue their education and plan for their futures. For these reasons, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges the committee's support on HB 3294, the Menstrual Dignity Act.

Sincerely,  
An Do  
Interim Executive Director  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://siecus.org/sex-ed-is-a-vehicle-for-social-change/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=cc47263d-030b-4433-bd66-fd1e3fd26f45>