



Testimony in Support for [HB 3294](#)

March 16, 2021

Chair Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, and I am the State Representative for House District 46. I'm proud to testify today in support of House Bill 3294.

We provide our students with basic necessities that are essential to their health and sanitation, such as toilet paper and hand soap. There is no reason menstrual products should not be considered a basic necessity. It is time to stop treating menstrual products as a privilege, and time to start recognizing the importance and benefits of allowing kids access to them.

First, all kids deserve access to menstrual products, regardless of what's in their or their guardians' pockets. In 2019, 15% of kids in Oregon under 18 lived below the poverty line- and note that this percentage is from before the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, one in five menstruators cannot afford these products every month, and one in four have missed class due to a lack of access to them. People should not have to forgo sanitary products in order to meet other expenses, and kids should not have to skip school just because they are menstruating. House Bill 3294 reduces absences by addressing this form of period poverty.

Second, just because a student can afford menstrual products every month, does not mean they always have access to them. Children and teens who are menstruating experience a new and totally unfamiliar bodily function. Virtually every menstruating teen will unexpectedly bleed. While we as adults would not ridicule one another for this, that is not the case for children and teenagers. The embarrassment students experience increases their absences, and distracts them from learning and from their extracurricular activities. House Bill 3294 recognizes menstrual products as a basic sanitation product, thereby addressing the stigma of menstruation, and allowing students to focus on learning and to feel confident to stay in class.

Finally, House Bill 3294 provides a public health benefit by reducing students' risk of infections. Using a menstrual product for too long, or even using a makeshift product (which is often the case when students don't have access to menstrual products) can cause infections such as urinary tract infections or toxic shock syndrome (TSS). TSS is a life-threatening variation of bacterial infections that can lead to sudden high fevers, low blood pressure, vomiting, diarrhea, rashes, seizures, and so on. Anyone who uses a tampon for too long is at risk for TSS. School days last for hours and many menstruating students must dispose of the product multiple times within one school day. Students often try to make a product last as long as possible either for financial reasons or because they simply do not have another one to replace it with. House Bill



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3294 would ensure that a product is always available, thereby eliminating the need to use one product for too long.

House Bill 3294 helps students to feel comfortable and clean, regardless of the time of the month. It is time to recognize menstrual products as the basic, sanitary necessities they are. I urge you to join me in supporting House Bill 3294.