

## LD 348: An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools

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As obstetrician-gynecologists in training, we are committed to advocating for policies that will improve reproductive health and equity. Periods are our specialty and we believe everyone deserves access to safe and affordable period products.

Menstrual health is defined as complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to the menstrual cycle.<sup>1</sup> Menstrual health is not possible without menstrual hygiene. Menstrual hygiene is not possible without access to affordable menstrual products. Almost a quarter of students in the US have struggled to afford menstrual products and 51% have worn menstrual products for longer than recommended.<sup>2</sup>

As physicians, we know that inadequate menstrual hygiene causes physical, psychological, and social harm. Specifically, inadequate menstrual hygiene can cause physical irritation and discomfort, and may contribute to reproductive tract infections.<sup>3</sup> It can also be a source of significant emotional distress (anxiety, fear, shame, embarrassment) and has been associated with decreased school attendance and participation.<sup>4</sup>

The expectation is that schools will provide products and resources to care for people's most essential health and hygiene needs - including drinking water, hand soap, toilet paper, and paper towels - but where are the menstrual products? We are talking about basic necessities for all menstruating people. We urge you to support LD348 to increase access to menstrual products in schools and improve the health, safety, and education of Mainers with periods.

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<sup>1</sup> Hennegan J, Winkler IT, Bobel C, Keiser D, Hampton J, Larsson G, Chandra-Mouli V, Plesons M, Mahon T. Menstrual health: a definition for policy, practice, and research. *Sex Reprod Health Matters*. 2021 Dec;29(1):1911618. doi: 10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618. PMID: 33910492; PMCID: PMC8098749.

<sup>2</sup> State of the Period 2021: The widespread impact of period poverty on US students. Commissioned by Thinx & PERIOD. <https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Sumpter C, Torondel B. A systematic review of the health and social effects of menstrual hygiene management. *PloS One*. 2013;8(4):e62004.

<sup>4</sup> Houston AM, Abraham A, Huang Z, D'Angelo LJ. Knowledge, attitudes, and consequences of menstrual health in urban adolescent females. *J Pediatr Adolesc Gynecol*. 2006 Aug;19(4):271-5. doi: 10.1016/j.jpog.2006.05.002. PMID: 16873031