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Gorham
LD 348

Testimony in support of
LD 348, “An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Month 05, Year 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Michael Brennan, and Distinguished/Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, our names are Rita Cummings and Rachel Cummings. We are students at Gorham High School and a member of GirlUp Club, whose mission is to create gender equity and help girls in need. . We are before you today and pleased to speak in favor of LD 348, “An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools.”

We are writing to encourage you to take action by addressing period poverty among students in Maine. According to the Alliance for Period Supplies, 1 in 6 Maine women between the ages of 12 and 44 are living below the Federal poverty line.

Many of these low-income female students are unable to afford necessary menstrual products — basic hygiene necessities. This reality highlights the need for menstrual equity: safe and affordable access to menstrual hygiene tools.

Fifteen states currently have legislation to ensure the availability of free access to menstrual products in schools (California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Hawaii, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Washington D.C.). Additionally, five other states have set up grant funding to provide period products in schools (Alabama, Missouri, Georgia, and North Carolina). The details of legislation surrounding free period product availability in schools differ between states. Some states require period products to be available in middle and high schools, and some include elementary schools. Some also include public universities and colleges. Regardless of the slight differences between these bills, they address the need for the availability of menstrual products for students.

Having free menstrual products in schools will not only address period poverty, but it will foster gender equity and enable all students to attend class. According to NPR, recent studies show that around a fourth of menstruating students still feel a stigma around menstruation. Another study showed that around 70% of students felt that their school environment made them feel self-conscious about their period. By making such menstrual products available, Maine will be taking steps toward ending the shame and stigma around periods. Additionally, having these menstrual products will allow students to attend class without the interruption of starting a period and not having the necessary menstrual supplies. Less class time will be missed, allowing for a more effective and successful education.

Dispensing menstrual products in schools will help normalize periods by enabling all students to attend class while decreasing the stigma that often surrounds periods. Such legislation will be able to address period poverty and supply the necessary menstrual products to students in need in Maine, allowing Maine to set an example of how a state can support its menstruating students.