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TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF

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

Good day, Senator Rafferty and Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am a mother, pediatrician and member of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and proud resident of Hallowell.

Last fall, as my son and I walked through the lobby of his middle school, we passed a table where supplies were being collected for local shelters. I suggested that we purchase menstrual supplies to contribute. *"Actually, we really need menstrual supplies here in our school. We run out really quickly"* he informed me. He explained that the civil rights group had been placing supplies in bathrooms for menstruating students to use, but that they quickly ran out as so many students are in need.

I left the school with my thoughts racing. How could this be an issue in 2023? How is it possible that I was completely unaware of the issue until my 13-year-old son informed me of the problem? Later that day, as I drove to Walgreens to purchase supplies, I drove by the state house. I couldn't help but wonder if the people hard at work inside were similarly unaware of this issue.

Menstrual products are essential for well-being and are a necessity for full participation of all people who menstruate. Inadequate menstrual support is associated with both health and psycho-social issues. Inadequate access to menstrual products can cause physical illness from infection, increased rates of absence from school and activities, and psychological stress. As we as a state look to improve the health of our population, decrease absenteeism, and address the mental health crisis among our youth, it just makes sense to address menstrual equity in our schools.

I ask that you vote in favor of this bill so that schools may receive funding to distribute and stock menstrual supplies in all bathrooms for students in grades 6-12. Lack of access to menstrual products is a problem with an exceedingly straightforward solution. Providing these products would be a concrete step towards increased equity in our state.

Thank you for the work you do for our beautiful state and thank you for your consideration of this bill.

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