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TO: Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
FROM: Mikenzie Dwyer, Public Health & Government Affairs Associate  
DATE: May 9, 2023

**SUPPORT** – [LD 348](#), An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and the members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Mikenzie Dwyer. I am a Public Health and Government Affairs Associate with the Maine Medical Association and I live in Windham. We are pleased to submit the following comments in support of LD 348, to make menstrual products available in all school bathrooms for grades 6 to 12.

The Maine Medical Association is Maine’s largest professional association representing over 4,300 current and future physicians from all specialties in all practice settings.

In the 130<sup>th</sup> legislature, LD 452 was passed through the committee with an ought to pass as amended report but died on adjournment. This bill seeks to complete the work in the 130<sup>th</sup> legislature and provide access to menstrual products for all students in school. The Maine Medical Association supports the intent to address period poverty – which 23% of students struggle with.

Schools began implementing free school meals for all children in the 2019-21 school year, recognizing the need for our students to food in their bellies to learn. 34% of students in public schools qualify for free lunch. Students also need their hygiene needs met well to feel comfortable and confident in the classroom – setting them up for success. [The Alliance for Period Supplies](#) has found 1 in 4 teens have missed class due to lack of access to period supplies.

Public assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and SNAP for women, infants, and children (WIC), although help to feed kids while they are home, do not allow for the purchase of feminine hygiene products. A year’s supply of tampons and pads cost around \$70 to \$120 – this does not include the cost of painkillers, heating pads, ruined underwear, etc. This estimate also does not account for conditions such as endometriosis which can cause sometimes month-long periods.

The covid-19 pandemic exacerbated many inequities, including period poverty, which

**The Maine Medical Association is a statewide volunteer organization formed in 1853, serving more than 4,300 current and future Maine physicians in all clinical specialties, organizations, and practice settings.**

negatively affected physical and mental health. [One study](#) found about 49.4% of women experiencing period poverty had depressive symptoms, compared to 28.6% of women who had not experienced menstrual poverty. Providing access to menstrual products in schools for all students can help to address some of the determinants of our mental health crisis.

The Maine Medical Association is dedicated to expanding access to care and improving health outcomes for all Mainers. LD 348 supports our student's health and education. It is for these reasons we urge the committee to vote ought-to-pass on LD 348.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Mikenzie Dwyer