

*131st Legislature*  
*Senate of*  
*Maine*  
*Senate District 23*

*Senator Mattie Daughtry*  
*Assistant Majority Leader*  
*3 State House Station*  
*Augusta, ME 04333-0003*  
*Office (207) 287-1515*

*Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry supporting*  
**LD 348, An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*  
**May 9, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today, I am pleased to be a co-sponsor of LD 348, “An Act to Make Menstrual Products Available in Certain Schools.” I want to thank Representative Cloutier for her work championing this measure—and have enjoyed getting to work on this legislation together.

Period poverty is a lack of access to period products and education due to a variety of things such as finances and location. Menstrual products are often out of reach for low-income and housing insecure folks. On average, a year’s worth of menstrual products can cost over a \$100 a year, meaning at a minimum, the cost would climb above \$4,000. (This doesn’t even include other items that people need with their periods including painkillers, heating pads, and more.) Period poverty is a reality in Maine where according to the Census Bureau, 11.8 percent of women in Maine aged 18 to 64 live in poverty and that number doesn’t include those under 18 and living in low-income households. Getting your period adds an additional level of stress for our students. We know the impact that hunger has on our students and last year we addressed that by providing universal free school meals. We need to do the same for menstrual products in our schools.

Without access to menstrual products a student can really struggle, whether it be finding it difficult to focus, not being able to find the products, or fearing the stigma attached to visiting the nurse’s office to ask for them. All of us who have had our periods know the giant fear of having a breakthrough, and can remember just how much more intense that panic is when you are young. A 2019 study found that one in five teens in the U.S. have struggled to afford period products or were unable to purchase them. The same study also showed that one in four have missed class due to a lack of access to period products. But this isn’t just about low-income individuals—it’s common for folks to get their periods unexpectedly or to have forgotten a tampon. Having these products available for free makes it better for everyone.

One of the towns I represent is Yarmouth. I was inspired by a seventeen year old who spoke in

favor of these efforts. This is what having period products in her school meant to her:

“It brings me an overwhelming feeling of hope to see such important legislation being discussed...As a student, I find myself constantly stressing about one thing or another. Homework, upcoming assessments, and even college applications seem to always be on my mind. As a young woman, however, one stressor outweighs them all: the fear that I might find myself in a situation where I desperately need, but cannot access menstrual products. I have avoided social events, dreaded going to school, and had to miss practice because it was that time of month and I didn’t want to face the embarrassment of starting my period and being completely helpless. I am fortunate enough to attend a school that has recently installed menstrual product dispensers in its bathrooms and I can’t describe the relief I feel knowing that, in school at least, I will always have access to those products. Imagine how menstruating individuals everywhere would feel if they knew that, no matter where they were, they would never be caught off guard by their periods, because they would always be able to access menstrual products. The issue of menstrual equity is easy to brush to the side because it only affects 50% of the population. But that is still 50% of the population who will, at one point or another, need to access menstrual products.”

Thank you to Amelia Kostin for lending her voice to this conversation.

We have made some progress toward menstrual equity. In the 130th Legislature, Maine lawmakers passed new laws to eliminate sales tax for the purchase of menstrual products and allow schools to accept donations to provide menstrual products to students free of charge.

Typically, individuals are not required to pay sales tax on items considered necessary for survival. For too long, menstrual products were considered a luxury item and not a necessity.

The new law eliminated the pink tax and corrected this injustice. The other new law protected donors of menstrual products from liability so they can give the products to schools and nonprofit groups without facing risk.

I would like to add that at my business, Moderation Brewing, we have been providing free period products in our bathrooms for years. We opted to have the products in a stein glass on the backs of the toilets, instead of using a dispenser which means we had minimal startup costs. We have had lots of positive feedback and have been thanked by those who needed an emergency tampon or pad. This has been a minor cost to us. I spend less on these products than I do on soap or toilet paper. Now it is just part of our normal bathroom related costs. The investment has been completely worth it for the positive comments and being told that it was a clear signal that our business was a safe and inclusive space.

Schools that serve students in grades 6 to 12 can make available menstrual products to students at no cost in school bathrooms. Over half the population menstruates; it is as normal and natural as any other bodily function. Yet many Maine students cannot access these essential products - meaning they sometimes go without, reuse products, or use substitutes that can get in the way of health, safety, and education. We can improve the lives of Maine students with this simple fix.

I thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.



**Mattie Daughtry**

Assistant Senate Majority Leader, Senate District 23

*Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth*

P.S. I would like to add that menstrual equity is also something we need to address in the Maine Legislature. The majority of our dispensers are not stocked with products. One of our senators did find a machine that was stocked and received a relic from the dispenser. (A picture of the product is being distributed with my testimony.) We are the people's house and to not even have these products available for sale sends a signal that these buildings are not welcoming. I have been elected for over a decade and not a month goes by where I don't over hear someone in a restroom asking for a tampon. We have a stock of these products in our office for emergencies since they can't be found elsewhere.

