



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
PORTLAND, ME

Endorsement of LD 452

April 20th 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee thank you for having me here today. My name is Belle Bocal and I am the rising President Elect of the Junior League of Portland. The Junior League of Portland has taken an official position in support of LD 452. We are a volunteer-led women's development organization. For nearly a century we have helped improve the world for Maine's youth. Our past projects include founding the Children's Museum and Theater of Maine, establishing the Center for Grieving Children, and developing the Backpack Project food program. Our current focus area is positive youth development with a special focus on ensuring the basic needs of Maine children and families.

We have identified period poverty as a serious obstacle to Maine children's ability to thrive. Our annual Free the Flow Campaign aims to spread awareness of period poverty and break down the stigma of menstruation.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs children and adolescents must have their basic physiological needs met before they can address their psychological needs, higher level development, and the realization of their full potential. It is impossible for Maine youth who menstruate to focus on their education when they are uncertain if they will be able to manage a basic bodily function several days a month.

Period poverty among youth is an unacknowledged problem in our society. According to Thinx's State of the Period report, 61% of teens with a period have worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours because they did not have adequate access to menstrual supplies. Stretching products for longer than recommended and using substitutes such as socks or toilet paper puts menstruators at an increased risk for toxic shock syndrome and infection.

The problem of girls missing school during "that time of the month" is not exclusive to the developing world. In a survey conducted by U by Kotex, 84% of US students reported missing class or knowing someone who had missed class because they did not have access to menstrual supplies. Period poverty is real and alive in Maine.

88% of menstruators agree that period products are a necessity and 75% think menstrual hygiene products should be available for free or reduced cost in schools and prisons [U by Kotex Survey].

In the words of Falmouth Middle School nurse Jean Barbour, who effectively lobbied the school board to get free menstrual products in her district, "Menstrual products should be treated like toilet



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paper and paper towels and be provided at no cost to either employees or students.” We applaud the efforts of districts like Falmouth and Yarmouth which allocate free period products to their pupils. However, there is not often funding for similar programs in less affluent districts, where the need for pads and tampons is greatest.

The Junior League of Portland wholeheartedly endorses LD 452 as it would increase menstrual equity in Maine. On behalf of the Junior League of Portland, I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time