

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Madeline Welch. I live in Denmark, ME and am a student at the University of New England. I'm here to testify in favor of LD 452, An Act To Require Certain Schools To Provide Menstrual Products.

This bill focuses on students in grades 6-12, and while I am no longer in that age group, I still remember what that time was like. It was very overwhelming and uncertain for many reasons, one of them being the changes in my body. The topic of periods is still taboo and can make people uncomfortable, but given that it is the subject of this bill and that it impacts so many, I ask you to embrace those feelings of discomfort as I continue.

One of the worst realizations you can have is that you have started your period before you were expecting to, or you are experiencing a heavy flow, and that you have bled through the back of your clothes. You can cover up the stains by tying your sweatshirt or sweater around your waist, but that's only a temporary fix. You rush to the bathroom, and if you're lucky, you have a spare pad or tampon in your bag. But if you were not, you rely on sanitary product dispensers.

While not necessarily expensive, most young people face this dilemma: they do not have change to spare for these machines, and thus often resort to using toilet paper. This is something I myself have had to do many times. It provides very minimal help and requires multiple trips back to the bathroom. This all tends to happen during class as well; the anxiety one feels trying to focus on what a teacher is saying when you have a significant menstrual problem is unbearable.

It's easy to say, "well, just be more prepared" but it's not that simple. First of all, some people have more sporadic periods that can't always be prepped for. For example, I have something called Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) which means my periods are very irregular. The rebuttal "just bring some pads from home," carries with it the assumption of financial stability and access to resources. Statistics indicate that many young people experience lack of access to menstrual products (what's called period poverty). One in five teens struggle to afford period products outside of school and 84% have missed school or known someone who has missed school due to period poverty. These high numbers indicate that it's not just a couple of kids who forgot to bring money to school, and that there are likely other factors at play.

Ultimately, the solution is challenging the very idea of charging students for this essential product. It is unfair to cast blame and shift responsibility for something that is outside of students' control. In terms of need, menstrual products are just as important as toilet paper. If they're not being charged for toilet paper, they shouldn't be charged for pads and tampons.

Thank you for your consideration and please vote ought to pass on LD 452.

Source:

Thinx & PERIOD (2020). *State of the Period: The Widespread Impact of Period Poverty on U.S.*

*Students.*

[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0795/1599/files/State-of-the-Period-white-paper\\_Thinx\\_PERIOD.pdf?455788](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0795/1599/files/State-of-the-Period-white-paper_Thinx_PERIOD.pdf?455788)