

Menstrual Products in Public Bathrooms Testimony – Andréa Reneau

HB0208 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – PROVISION OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS

Presented to the Honorable Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means  
Committee

January 30, 2020 1:00pm

POSITION: SUPPORT

My name is Andréa Reneau, I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at a Title -1 Baltimore City Public School. Recently I began work with a group of 6<sup>th</sup> grade middle school girls on a project for menstrual products in our school. I would be remiss not to mention that starting this project with a group of 11 and 12-year-old girls was fear inducing, to talk to girls about self-esteem is one thing, to talk to them about real tangible ways they can take control of their self-esteem through a public fundraiser for menstrual products is another. To my surprise, they were all in. We talked about our periods, but not only that, how getting your period at school is uncomfortable and often embarrassing. A moment of commiseration at the state of the health suite pads, how I too, at 12 remember going to the nurse and asking for what can only be described as a uncomfortable thick and ill-fitting pad, to try and make it till the end of the day. At 30 I'm all too aware of what it means to get a surprise or have an accident when you haven't kept track or maybe your period comes early, or late. This seems to be true for all women who go through the right of passage that is, getting your period. To know that the state of menstrual products with in our schools hasn't changed in over 18 years is concerning.

The girls were adamant that we needed to make sure we had menstrual products in different sizes, and underwear, and things to help them clean up, simple things we take for granted at times in our own homes aren't available in the place that they spend the majority of their day, their week, and their youth. So, we move forward, with our fund raiser, asking for over \$600 of menstrual products to be distributed in our school. We were funded with in 48 hours. And while this was an amazing feat that we a group of girls who didn't even fully understand what was happening to their bodies did, it also seemed so unfair that this is what Baltimore City children have been reduced to, fundraising for something that should be made accessible and free to all of them, without the awkward question of 'why are you going to the nurse, again.' When we got all of our menstrual products we knew we wanted to make them even more accessible to girls, leaving bright pink boxes of pads with each of their teachers, a place where they could go discretely and get what they needed to get through the day.

Currently all teachers from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> have these emergency packs in their room. The girls also made small SOS packs to carry themselves, all 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls in our building now have access to these. All of this made sense, it felt right and normal and natural to help these girls as they took control of their health and their bodies. Other teachers have come to me asking how, in classes with students as young as 10, we can make more menstrual products available, because without a doubt, our girls need it. And now they need us, the adults, the one who are meant to foster their growth, their self-esteem, and help them grow their voice, to help them. I thank everyone involved in bringing this bill to the floor, and I

thank you for taking the time to hear a little about what our girls in Baltimore City are doing. They are believing in us, in you to help make a change.

Thank you,  
Andréa Reneau

4221 Harcourt Road  
Baltimore, MD 21214

[ajreneau@gmail.com](mailto:ajreneau@gmail.com)