

HB588_Local Health Departments and Community Actio

Uploaded by: Angela Martin

Position: FAV



3/28/2022

Re: Support of HB 588 – Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies - Feminine Hygiene Products

Dear Honorable Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP) to urge your support of HB 588 – Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies - Feminine Hygiene Products.

The Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP) is a statewide non-profit organization comprised of Maryland's 17 Community Action Agencies, which collectively serve every Maryland county. Together, we work toward eradicating homelessness and poverty to realize our vision of ensuring that all Maryland individuals and families are stable, economically secure, and live in safe and thriving communities.

MCAP supports HB 588 because of its impact on the girls and women with low-income that our organizations serve.

If passed, the bill would:

- Require local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies to make feminine hygiene products available to any women enrolled in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, in an amount sufficient to meet the needs of the woman obtaining the feminine hygiene products.
- Require the Governor to include funding in the annual budget, in an amount estimated to be sufficient for providing feminine hygiene products.

Period poverty is defined by the American Medical Women's Association as "inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities, and waste management." MCAP supports this legislation as it exemplifies the best practices in making feminine hygiene products available to women with low-income. We believe that this bill support the right for everyone to live with decency and dignity. It is time for Maryland women to receive full access to feminine hygiene products, regardless of their ability to purchase said products. Meeting this basic need will contribute to the foundation that Marylanders with low-income need to fully engage with and thrive in their educational and employment endeavors and build a better future for themselves and their families.

If there is any additional information that I can provide for you as you consider this bill, I would be happy to help. You can contact me at amartin@maryland-cap.org, or by calling 205-757-0764.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Martin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Angela Martin, Executive Director

HB588_Sponsor_Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Bagnall

Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 30, 2022

HB588 - Community Action Agencies - Provision of Feminine Hygiene Products

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the Finance and Budget and Taxation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 588.

Period poverty is a real issue for many women and girls. When times get tough for low income families, many often have to make difficult choices and sacrifices just to survive. When forced to cut back, people will choose to provide food for their family and diapers for their baby before considering spending their limited capital on menstrual products. Local and State-run food and resource pantries have seen drastic increases in the number of families who rely on them in the last year. One of the hardest products to keep in stock is menstrual and feminine hygiene products due to the high demand and high cost to the providers to supply them. While there are state and federal programs such as WIC and SNAP for food, formula, and medications, currently there are no financial resources to aid in the purchase of menstrual products. Limited access to menstrual products can lead to lost work and wages, adverse health effects, and impact the autonomy and mental wellbeing of those in need.

Additionally, populations in need of menstrual products are overwhelmingly communities of color. Lack of access to these essential health products is not just a health issue but one of racial equity. Menstrual health should not be a luxury for those who can afford it. HB 588 will provide for greater access to menstrual products for low-income populations.

In order to ensure this program is implemented seamlessly and effectively in the communities that need it most, we are requesting a pilot program for three years as an initial launch. It is our hope that a pilot will allow Community Action Agencies and Local Health Departments to examine the feasibility, cost, and functionality for a large-scale program across the entire state.

HB588 was passed out of the House with some additional clean-up amendments. First, because local health departments have been overwhelmed with the COVID-19 pandemic and lack the space and capacity for menstrual product distribution, I have opted to remove them from the mandate while keeping it clear that they will work with community agencies to make this program a success. Further, I have expanded on the initial budget language to clarify the funding will come from grants to avoid an unfunded mandate.

There have been other bills both this and last session working to expand access to menstrual products to both incarcerated individuals and students. I am seeking to build on the esteemed work of my colleagues and I ask for a favorable report on HB 588.

Additional article: <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/maryland-bill-would-distribute-free-menstrualhygiene-products-to-low-income-households/2588683/>

Community Action Board Testimony_HB588_March 30 He

Uploaded by: Leslie Frey

Position: FAV



**Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony in Support of HB588
Community Action Agencies – Provision of Feminine Hygiene Products
Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair; The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair; and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Tiffany Jones, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County’s federally designated anti-poverty group, is in full support of HB588 and asks the Committee for a favorable report. Feminine hygiene products place a financial burden on women, especially lower-income women. Distributing feminine hygiene products will help to ensure that more women have access to products that are a necessity not covered by any other public assistance program.

This bill aims to address “period poverty”, which is “the social, economic, political, and cultural barriers to menstrual products, education, and sanitation”¹. This is an often-overlooked challenge for women. A survey of 2,000 women (aged 18–55) found that 49% have faced a lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, hand washing facilities and/or waste management. Sixty percent of respondents admitted to budgeting in order to afford sanitary items and 79% made sacrifices or gone with less in order to afford their necessities.

The amended bill calls on three Maryland Community Action Agencies to begin distributing feminine hygiene products as part of a pilot program. CAAs, which conduct data-driven community needs assessments to inform planning, are well-positioned to take the lead on this initiative. Each local agency develops an annual Community Action Plan that is approved by the agency’s Board, which include representatives from the public, private, and low-income sectors.

While the Montgomery County Community Action Agency is not included in the pilot program, we hope that this program will be expanded in the years to come to our agency and others since this issue impacts women everywhere. In Montgomery County for example, about 8.5% of women are below the Federal Poverty Level (compared with 6.3% of men). For single mothers with children under 18, the poverty rate jumps to 18.7%.² Furthermore, 31% of women in the County fall below the Self-Sufficiency Standard (compared with 25% of men).³ This means that 31% of women in the County cannot afford basic necessities (housing, food, transportation, etc.) without government assistance.

The cost of feminine hygiene products adds to the financial burden women face. This bill could help, at least in one area, to reduce this burden. We ask that you vote in support of HB588.

¹ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/period-poverty#what-is-it>

² <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

³ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/OCA/CommunityAction/interactiveSelfSufficiency.html>

LWVMD-HB 588- Feminine Hygiene Products- 3:30.pdf

Uploaded by: Nora Miller Smith

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

HB 588: Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies- Feminine Hygiene Products

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng

DATE: March 30, 2022

The League of Women Voters Maryland supports House Bill 588: Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies- Feminine Hygiene Products.

The League supports a health care system that ensures equal access to affordable, quality health care- including reproductive health care- for all U.S. residents. The League's "Statement of Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs," adopted and revised in the 1970's and 1980's, stress that persons whose earnings are inadequate have the right to services and materials sufficient to meet their needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.

Menstrual hygiene is a basic human need. "Period poverty," or the inability to afford sanitary products to manage menstrual bleeding, affects women all over the world, **including in Maryland.** Women need to manage their periods with dignity and comfort. The lack of adequate access to period products has a strong negative impact on women's mental health and well-being, as well as their ability to participate in normal activities such as work and school. Without adequate access to these essential items, families can be forced to choose between buying tampons and pads or buying food or medicine, as state and federal public health and nutritional assistance programs such as WIC or SNAP do not cover the cost of menstrual products.

Feminine hygiene products are medical necessities. Per the Maryland Tax Code covering Medical Supplies and Hygienic Aids, feminine hygiene products are exempt from sales tax, as they are considered medical products. The federal CARES Act, signed into law in March 2020, expanded flexible spending accounts (FSA's) and Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) to cover period products- also recognizing them as medical products.

Period poverty is a public health issue. Lack of adequate access to menstrual products can increase the risk of serious infections such as toxic shock, as women can extend the use of pads or tampons past the recommended time period, or be forced to use unsanitary materials such as rags, socks, paper towels, toilet paper or newspaper to manage menstrual bleeding.

Access to menstrual hygiene products is an equity and human rights issue. Period poverty disproportionately affects poor women and women of color. Period poverty is demeaning. All Marylanders should be able to manage their periods with dignity, knowing they have adequate access to safe menstrual products.

House Bill 588 would make feminine hygiene products available free of charge to Medicaid recipients. The financial impact would be mitigated by the decreased amount of Medicaid dollars spent on entirely preventable infections caused by lack of adequate access to this basic need.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to House Bill 588.

2022 ACNM HB 588 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee
Bill Number: House Bill 588
Title: Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products
Hearing Date: March 30, 2022
Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) supports *HB 588 - Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products*. This bill would require local health departments, in collaborations with certain community action agencies, to provide feminine hygiene products at no cost to any woman enrolled in the Maryland Medicaid Medical Assistance Program. The program would be funded through a required appropriation by the Governor.

ACNM provides woman-centered care and respects each woman's right to dominion over her own health and care. Midwives consult and support life events such as puberty, birth and menopause as physiological transitions. ACNM strongly believes that women should be afforded the access to free feminine hygiene products to have better dominion over their lives and the ability to engage in civic society without any hindrances.

A survey of low-income women in a large city found that nearly two-thirds couldn't afford menstrual hygiene products such as tampons or pads¹. Nearly half the women in this study said there were times in the past year when they could not afford to buy both food and period products. There are currently at least 42 million impoverished women in the United States, and many face indignity and shame for not being able to care for themselves during their period.² Without access to these essential products, women's movements and ambitions are tempered. Women may not feel comfortable leaving their homes, going to work, or participating in civic life when on their period. What's more, inadequate access menstrual products can create risk for serious infections like bacterial growth in the vagina or toxic shock

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-menstruation-usa/even-in-the-u-s-poor-women-often-cant-afford-tampons-pads-idUSKCN1P42TX>

² <https://www.nursing.upenn.edu/live/news/1545-the-state-of-period-poverty-in-the-us>

syndrome. This bill will allow women enrolled in Medicaid, often those most in need, to access feminine hygiene products at no cost.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

2022 PPM HB 588 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Suhani Chitalia

Position: FAV

Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 588– Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products

Hearing Date: March 30, 2022

Position: Support

Planned Parenthood of Maryland supports *HB 588- Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products*. This bill would require local health departments and community action agencies, with an appropriation from the Governor, to provide feminine hygiene products at no cost to any woman enrolled in the Maryland Medicaid Medical Assistance Program.

As an established and trusted community reproductive health care provider, serving Marylanders for more than 90 years and counting, we believe that cost and access should be no barrier for individuals who require menstrual hygiene products. The research demonstrates that “period poverty”, meaning the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, is common among low-income communities. In a study in St. Louis, two-thirds of low-income women could not afford menstrual hygiene products in the prior year.ⁱ

Access to menstrual hygiene products is important for both the health and dignity of all Marylanders. We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ Sebert Kuhlmann, Anne PhD, MPH; Peters Bergquist, Eleanor MA, MSPH; Danjoint, Djenie MPH; Wall, L. Lewis MD, DPhil Unmet Menstrual Hygiene Needs Among Low-Income Women, *Obstetrics & Gynecology*: February 2019 - Volume 133 - Issue 2 - p 238-244
doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000003060