



**2022 SESSION  
POSITION PAPER**

**BILL:** HB 588 - Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products  
**COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
**POSITION:** Letter of Support With Amendments  
**BILL ANALYSIS:** HB 588, as written, will require local health departments and community action agencies to make available to any woman enrolled in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program a sufficient supply of feminine hygiene products and require the Governor to include sufficient program funding in the annual budget bill.

**POSITION RATIONALE:** The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) *supports House Bill (HB) 588 with Sponsor amendments* which have been submitted to modify the role of local health departments (LHDs) from direct responsibility for distribution of feminine hygiene products to a supportive role for Community Action Agencies (CAAs). MACHO also agrees with the amendment to launch this initiative as a pilot program, with the expectation of statewide expansion within two to three years.

Although a topic not often discussed publicly, many low-income women and adolescents struggle to afford needed hygiene products. Those with menorrhagia (very heavy blood loss during menstruation), may need to use more than one product at a time (e.g., a tampon and pad) and must change products as often as hourly. The costs of these products are often unaffordable for women with low-income jobs and teens in lower-income families.

In some households, women are forced to decide between the cost of feminine hygiene products and other necessities, including food, rent, and basic utilities. For those who cannot afford hygiene products, they are often unable to leave their home for several days out of each month. This results in multiple absences from school and the inability to report to work.

HB 588 provides a means of supplying low-income women with products that are necessary for participating in fundamental daily activities, including school and work. The benefits of this program go well beyond personal hygiene. When girls can consistently attend school and women can consistently report to work, society as a whole benefits and the lives and opportunities of the girls and women improve.

MACHO supports the Sponsor’s amendments to remove LHDs from the responsibility of directly distributing feminine hygiene products. This a role that would require physical space for storage and distribution that is not available in most LHDs. It would also necessitate the hiring of additional staff and carry a substantial administrative burden. LHDs are willing to support CAAs, much as we support the network that makes up the Maryland Diaper Bank. LHDs can coordinate with local Departments of Social Services to provide referrals to low-income families and help CAAs with marketing to promote their programs.

Launching this program as a pilot in two or three locations provides an opportunity to identify the most effective ways to reach those in need, understand low-income participants’ obstacles such as transportation to distribution sites, and refine operations to make the best use of staffing and product resources.

For these reasons MACHO encourages support with amendments for HB 588. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, Executive Director, MACHO, at [rmaiora1@jhu.edu](mailto:rmaiora1@jhu.edu) or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*