



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee
Bill Number: House Bill 588
Title: Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies – Feminine Hygiene Products
Hearing Date: February 23, 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 and 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.