
BILL NO: House Bill 588
TITLE: Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies - Feminine Hygiene Products
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: February 23, 2017
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 588 would ensure feminine hygiene products are made available to any woman who is enrolled in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program via their local health department or community action agency.

Providing women with feminine hygiene products is a matter of simple human dignity. They are not a luxury, nor should they be treated as such. Recent studies show that when left without access to period products, homeless women and girls often have to improvise, steal tampons, ask strangers for help, substitute paper towels for pads, and even use T-shirts as makeshift rags. These coping practices lead to poor menstrual hygiene. Poor menstrual health and practices, research shows, can lead to serious infections like bacterial growth in the vagina or toxic shock syndrome. Lack of access to menstrual products can also lead to people missing school or work. A 2019 report in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology found that two-thirds of women living in poverty could not afford such products the previous year and one-fifth could not afford them on a monthly basis. According to a 2019 national survey, two-thirds of teens feel stressed about inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products, 1 in 5 teens have struggled to afford products, and 84% of students have missed class or skipped school due to lack of access to these products.

For the above reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland urges a favorable report for HB 588.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.