
BILL NO: House Bill 208
TITLE: Public Schools - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
HEARING DATE: January 29, 2019
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 208 would require all public schools in Maryland to install menstrual hygiene dispensers in at least two bathrooms by October 1, 2020, and in all bathrooms by August 1, 2024. Additionally, each county school board shall ensure that public schools provide free menstrual products to their students via those dispensers.

According to the 2018 Maryland Poverty Profiles, 13% of children in Maryland live in poverty¹. Furthermore, the Maryland Department of Education reports that in 2019, 42.6% of Maryland public school students enrolled for free or reduced price meals². Thus, it is clear that there are young women attending schools across the State who struggle to afford basic necessities, including menstrual products. When this occurs, students frequently miss class or skip school all together out of embarrassment and out of lack of other options. At the very least their attention is clearly focused on the issues related to their period, and they are unable to focus on learning. Access to menstrual hygiene products is a gender parity issue, disproportionately affecting low-income girls who already face a number of barriers to education.

A quality, free public education is a right bestowed upon all children in Maryland. But that right is not limited to just attending school. Once in school, children are guaranteed *equal educational opportunity*, regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status. In order to fully participate and enjoy the benefits of those rights, students must be provided the resources necessary to be able to concentrate on learning and growing as citizens. Providing menstrual products to students will allow young women to focus on learning and reach their full potential, without being burdened by the financial concerns of purchasing those essential products.

For these reasons, the WLC supports HB208 and urges a favorable report.

¹ 2018 Maryland Poverty Profile, Maryland Alliance for the Poor, https://mda.maryland.gov/about_mda/Documents/SNAB/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2018_1-15-2018_T.pdf, last visited January 28, 2020

² Maryland Department of Education, Free and Reduced Price Meals Statistics, <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/pages/school-community-nutrition/freereducedpricemealstatistics.aspx>, last visited January 28, 2020