

Claire Gelillo
Rockville, MD

HB0208 PUBLIC SCHOOLS-PROVISION OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS

Presented to the Hon. Anne Kaiser and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

January 30, 2020 1:00pm

POSITION: SUPPORT

Good afternoon to the members of the House Ways & Means Committee and everyone else. My name is Claire Gelillo and I am a Junior at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Maryland.

It is a very painful moment when you realize that you were born into a society that values you less. It was not until the notion of equity was brought before me that I even stopped to reflect upon the injustice that I and other menstruating people have lived with our entire lives. The injustice that those before us had also faced.

Somehow, I internalized this idea that I was not worth the trouble. Standing here today, I can say that demanding equity is not, and never will be, an inconvenience to those who have the power to solve the issue.

It astounds me that this is still up for debate; something that should have been put in place a very long time ago. Having access to menstrual products is a biological need, not a luxury. Over half of the population knows that. I have frequently heard the

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argument that if you really need a pad or tampon, you can just go to the nurse. At my school, this is true.

But why is it that the place you go when you are sick or injured is the only place you can get what you need to deal with your menstrual flow? Let me remind you that having a period is a monthly occurrence for most. So yes, you can go out of your way to the nurse when you need a pad.

But as long as that is the only place you can get one, it will be the symbolic proof that what we need to lead our normal lives is not readily available to us.

We don't have to panic or go out of our way to get toilet paper for other bodily functions. What makes this bodily function different? I can say, without a doubt, that we are looking right in the face of an inequality in the way we are seen and treated as humans, purely based on our biology.

I am done having a natural, healthy part of my biology be stigmatized. I am done having to be stressed out about when, where, and if I will have access to menstrual products. I am done having to see my peers miss class, feel ashamed, and be devalued by the very system that is supposed to nurture us as human beings. We're not asking for a luxury. We are demanding a human right. This needs to get done. This is not a question of doability. It is the long awaited fulfillment of equity.

Claire Gelillo
Rockville, MD

Claire Gelillo

729 Wilson Avenue

Rockville, MD 20850

clairegelillo@gmail.com