

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Public Schools - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products (HB 208)**

January 30, 2020

SUPPORT

Maryland PTA is the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For 105 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of House Bill 208 ("HB 208"), requiring local school systems to provide, at no charge to students, menstrual hygiene products (i.e., size-appropriate tampons or sanitary napkins for use in connection with the menstrual cycle) via dispensers in school restrooms. HB 208 would also require public schools to install menstrual hygiene product dispensers in at least two restrooms on or before October 1, 2020, and in all restrooms on or before August 1, 2024.

HB 208 complements Maryland PTA's position supporting equitable access to quality, affordable health care for all children and youth. A recent Confidence & Puberty Survey conducted by the feminine hygiene products company Always[®] found nearly 1 in 5 U.S. girls ages 16-24 have either left school early or missed school entirely because of not having access to menstrual products. Maryland PTA supports increasing the availability of feminine hygiene products to help secure a healthy, safe, and equitable school environment for all students.

HB 208 would address inequity and improve access to basic health care needs for Maryland school-age girls of all backgrounds. According to the food bank network Feeding America, providing feminine hygiene products in public schools helps alleviate a lack of access to essential health care, which disparately impacts low-income girls. For that reason, other states including California, Illinois, and New York, as well as the countries of Scotland, Wales, and Kenya, have similar laws.

Maryland PTA recognizes HB 208 places a fiscal mandate on local school systems. We also appreciate the concern about waste resulting from school pranks and childhood folly. Additionally, some public schools provide menstrual hygiene products through a school nurse. The concerns for public health, equal access to education for females, and equity far outweigh the cost burden or potential waste. Making menstrual hygiene products available in school restrooms would protect the dignity of female

Written Testimony of Maryland PTA
Maryland House of Delegates (Ways and Means Committee)
Public Schools - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products (HB 208)
January 30, 2020
Page 2

students, avoid disruption when school nurses are not available, and give all girls in Maryland equal access to the products. HB 208 will ensure every female child can reach her potential.

For the reasons stated above, Maryland PTA supports House Bill 208 and recommends a favorable vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edna Battle", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Edna Harvin Battle
President