



Bill No: HB205
Title: Public Schools – Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products - Requirement
Committee: Ways and Means
Hearing: January 27, 2021
Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women’s groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW’s purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **HB205 a priority on the 2021 MLAW Agenda and we urge your support.**

HB205 calls for all public middle and high schools to install menstrual hygiene product dispensers in at least two restrooms in each building, and at least in one restroom in each elementary school by October 2021, and almost all restrooms by August 2025. Public schools will be required to install low cost, quality vending machines to supply maxi pads and tampons, free to students, with size-appropriate products. The legislation seeks to increase school attendance and extracurricular participation among menstruating students who lack access to such products, and decrease peer harassment that contributes to poor school climate.

Period poverty, defined as the inability to access menstrual hygiene products, and the corresponding issue of period stigma are barriers to education for many Maryland students. Recent data has shown that low-income women are likely to be unable to afford menstrual hygiene products in the U.S. 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. The Maryland Department of Education reports that in 2019, 43.2% of Maryland public school students enrolled for free or reduced price meals, indicating that their families struggled to afford basic necessities and many of whom are students of menstruating age. Another recent study commissioned by Thinx and Period (a nonprofit fighting period poverty), found that 1 in 5 U.S. teens have struggled to afford period products or could not afford them at all. The same survey also found that 84% of students have missed class time or skipped school altogether due to a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products. Maryland passed a menstrual equity bill in 2017 for public school students experiencing housing instability, but the products are available only in school nurse offices, where distance and limited hours can create problems, as well as little awareness of the law.

For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of HB205.

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women
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