



HB 457 - Institutions of Higher Education - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products - Requirement
House Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2026

SUPPORT

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 457. This bill requires institutions of higher education to provide menstrual hygiene products, free of charge, in all restrooms on campus.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

HB 457 is a straightforward, practical step toward strengthening financial security for Maryland students and advancing menstrual equity.

For many students, especially those from low- and moderate-income households, college is already a financial balancing act. Tuition, housing, food, books, and transportation costs continue to rise. Even relatively small recurring expenses can destabilize a tight budget. Menstrual products are not optional. They are a necessary health item. Yet students must purchase them month after month, year after year, regardless of their financial situation.

Many students in Maryland come from low-income households or experience housing instability, making access to basic hygiene necessities inconsistent or uncertain. For students living paycheck to paycheck or relying on financial aid refunds to cover essentials, the cost of menstrual products competes directly with food, transportation, and other necessities. No student should have to choose between a meal and managing a natural bodily function.

This burden is compounded by what is commonly referred to as the "pink tax" which is the pattern of women's products being priced higher than comparable men's products. While Maryland has made progress in addressing sales tax inequities, the broader economic reality remains: menstruation carries a recurring financial cost that is borne disproportionately by those who menstruate. Over time, these costs add up significantly, particularly for students already facing economic insecurity.

Access to education should not be undermined by preventable financial barriers. By normalizing and institutionalizing access to menstrual hygiene products, Maryland affirms that student dignity, health, and financial stability matter.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 457.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope