

Good evening, Chair and members of the Ways and Means Committee. My name is Isha Ande, and I am a current high school senior and proud constituent from Legislative District 9B. I'm here today to speak in strong support of House Bill 541.

After the initial passage of HB205 in 2021, menstrual products were made available to the broader student population. The concept of that bill was powerful and necessary. It acknowledged that menstrual products are not a luxury, but a basic need. Anytime I forgot to pack an extra pad or tampon, or found myself needing an emergency product, I could go to the restroom closest to my class and access one — until I couldn't.

Too often, when students try to use this service, we are met with empty dispensers. Instead of relief, we feel panic. We are forced to sneakily ask friends, whispering in hallways, hoping someone has something to spare. It becomes an embarrassment ritual that so many of us know all too well. And for students who may not have the financial means to consistently afford products at home, that panic is not occasional — it's routine.

I speak in support of this bill tonight to ensure that a well-intentioned law does not go to waste. The passage of HB541 would ensure that dispensers are consistently stocked, so that access is reliable — not random. It means that a student who needs a product first thing in the morning can quietly walk into a restroom and get one, without stigma, without explanation, and without fear. It means that students no longer have to sit through class distracted and uncomfortable, tying sweatshirts around their waists or worrying about humiliation instead of focusing on learning.

Access to menstrual products is about dignity. It is about equity. And it is about ensuring that no student's education is disrupted by something completely natural and unavoidable.

Members of the Ways and Means Committee, I urge you to support House Bill 541. The changes this bill introduces have the potential to make a meaningful and lasting difference for students across Maryland. You have the opportunity to ensure that the promise of past legislation is fully realized.

Thank you all for your time and consideration this evening.