



Mission: *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy* **Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 541
Public Schools - Restocking Menstrual Hygiene Products - Requirement
Committee: Ways and Means
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
Hearing Date: February 18, 2026

Chair Jheanelle Wilkins, Vice-Chair Jessica Feldmark, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of HB 541, which would require public schools to ensure consistent restocking of menstrual hygiene products. This legislation addresses a basic but critical public health and educational equity issue: ensuring that students have reliable access to essential hygiene products throughout the school day.

Access to menstrual hygiene products is not a luxury—it is a fundamental health necessity. Limited availability of menstrual products impacts as many as two-thirds of low-income women in U.S. cities and significantly contributes to school absenteeism, with up to 84% of students either missing class themselves or knowing someone who has because of it. When students can’t access proper menstrual products, they often resort to unsafe alternatives such as toilet paper, rags, or other inadequate hygiene methods, which can lead to a higher risk of infection and greater emotional strain. By ensuring that existing product programs are properly maintained and restocked, this bill moves beyond symbolic access and ensures practical implementation.^{1,2}

From a public health standpoint, period poverty is associated with psychological distress, absenteeism, and inequitable educational outcomes, disproportionately affecting students from low-income and underserved communities.³ Maryland continues to invest in educational equity and student achievement; ensuring reliable product availability is a modest but impactful step toward eliminating preventable barriers to learning.

Economically, the cost of restocking products is minimal when compared to the broader social and educational costs of absenteeism and disengagement.⁴ By supporting student attendance and dignity, HB0541 represents a cost-effective investment in educational continuity and health equity. We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

¹ Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. (2022). Period poverty, a growing public health concern. Accessed on February 16, 2026 from <https://www.astho.org/topic/brief/period-poverty-a-growing-public-health-concern/#:~:text=Impact%20of%20Period%20Poverty,by%20the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic.>

² *Report finds “period poverty” a top reason girls miss school | K-12 Dive.* (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2026, from <https://www.k12dive.com/news/report-finds-period-poverty-a-top-reason-girls-miss-school/565424/>

³ Njoku, A.; Al-Hassan, M.; Tohura, S.; Garcia, K. Period Poverty Among Black, Hispanic and Low-Income Communities in the United States: Challenges and Recommendations. *Hygiene* 2025, 5, 58. <https://doi.org/10.3390/hygiene5040058>

⁴ Aka, B. G. (2025). Period poverty in the United States of America: A socio-economic policy analysis. *Journal of Global Health Economics and Policy*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.52872/001c.137889>

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
PO Box 7045 · 6801 Oak Hall Ln · Columbia, MD 21045-9998
GetInfo@MdPHA.org www.mdpha.org 443.475.0242