

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB541

TO: Chair Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair Delegate Jessica Feldmark, and Members  
of the Committee

FROM: Bridget Zwarich, Intern of the Young Women's Giving Circle (YWGC)

DATE: February 18, 2026

RE: Support for HB541 - Restocking Menstrual Hygiene Products

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon delegates, my name is Bridget Zwarich, an intern representing the Young Women's Giving Circle (YWGC), and am in favor of the HB541 bill, ensuring menstrual hygiene products will be restocked in public schools. The Young Women's Giving Circle organization was established by the Women's Giving Circle which was founded just short of 25 years ago, with the noble goal of addressing underfunding of programs for women and girls, and to support the needs of those women and young women.

Before I was a member of the YWGC, I was a young woman who had been raised in this county. Beginning middle school, I remember being so worried about handling my period during the school day, or even worse, to get my period during school and not be able to do anything about it; however my Mom reassured me of the dispensers installed in schools, providing me with what I would need. However now, as an 11th grader, and having experienced years and years of menstruating during the school day, I can confidently report that I have not been able to take advantage of these dispensers when I have needed them. This has not been because the dispensers aren't there, but because they are consistently empty, and therefore, ineffectual. These

dispensers will not be able to ease any other young woman's mind, or be of aid if they are not followed through on being restocked.

One of the first assignments we had as interns was to audit our school bathroom dispensers across our schools and share a form to audit middle schools and such. Our data reveals on average, 26% (across 10 high schools) of the school's menstrual product dispensers were stocked. Though not quantifiable, a moving aspect of auditing was hearing so many other young women tell me to not even try to use the dispenser, that it's "never been stocked", when I went and tried to use the dispenser.

Restocking the menstrual products does not need to take much more effort than the attention given to the bathrooms each day, restocking the toilet paper, soap, and paper towels. Just like each of those, period products are not a luxury, they are a basic necessity, and should be given the same undeniable attention and priority. In order to break the cycle of product inaccessibility, custodial staff should replenish the menstrual product dispensers, if not each, every other day. This restocking will get the over 14,000 girls and young women enrolled in middle and high schools in Howard County the basic resources they need to get through each day. For these reasons, the Young Women's Giving Circle urges the committee to support the HB541 policy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Bridget Zwarich,

First-Year Internship Holder

The Young Women's Giving Circle

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