



BILL NUMBER: HB 541

TITLE: Public Schools – Restocking Menstrual Hygiene Products – Requirement

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

Reproductive Justice Maryland Action supports Senate Bill 307 in keeping with our mission to champion reproductive justice as a fundamental human right for all Marylanders. We believe that everyone deserves the ability to manage their reproductive health with dignity, safety, and autonomy, free from stigma and unnecessary barriers. This includes ensuring that students who menstruate have reliable access to menstrual hygiene products during the school day.

Menstrual hygiene products are essential health items, yet many students experience period product insecurity, defined as the inability to access or afford menstrual products when needed.¹ Peer-reviewed research demonstrates that period product insecurity among adolescents is

¹ E11. (2019, October 31). *Period poverty*. American Medical Women's Association. <https://amwa-doc.org/period-poverty/>

widespread and has direct educational consequences.² A 2021 study of high school students in St. Louis found that 64% of students reported period product insecurity, and over two-thirds reported missing school because of a period-related problem.² When students miss class time or are unable to focus due to unmet basic needs, their academic performance, attendance, and overall well-being suffer.

Maryland has already taken an important step by requiring menstrual hygiene product dispensers in certain public school restrooms.³ However, the presence of a dispenser alone does not guarantee access. Without a clear requirement to ensure that these dispensers are regularly restocked, students may still find themselves without products at critical moments. Senate Bill 307 addresses this implementation gap by requiring county boards of education to ensure that menstrual hygiene product dispensers are consistently stocked and available to students at no cost.

The need for this legislation is further underscored by evidence linking menstrual product insecurity to negative mental health outcomes.^{4,5} Studies have shown associations between lack of access to menstrual products and increased stress, shame, and depressive symptoms,

² Sebert Kuhlmann, A., Teni, M. T., Key, R., & Billingsley, C. (2021). Period product insecurity, school absenteeism, and use of school resources to obtain period products among high school students in St. Louis, Missouri. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 40(3), 329–335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10598405211069601>

³ Delegate Reznik. (n.d.). *HOUSE BILL 205*. HOUSE BILL 205 F1, J1 (1lr0722) ENROLLED BILL . <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/bills/hb/hb0205e.pdf>

⁴ Ssesanga, T., Thomas, K. A., Nelson, K. A., Oenen, E., Kansime, C., Lagony, S., Enomut, J. R., Mayanja, Y., & Weiss, H. A. (2024). Understanding menstrual factors associated with poor mental health among female secondary school students in Uganda: A cross-sectional analysis. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-024-00829-6v>

⁵ Rohatgi, A., & Dash, S. (2023). Period poverty and mental health of menstruators during COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons and implications for the future. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2023.1128169>

particularly among individuals already facing economic hardship.⁶ Ensuring reliable access to menstrual products in schools is a preventive public health measure that supports both physical and mental health during a critical developmental period. By promoting consistent school attendance and academic engagement, reliable access to menstrual products also supports educational attainment, which is strongly associated with higher lifetime earnings, workforce participation, and overall economic productivity.⁷ Investing in menstrual equity in schools is therefore not only a public health intervention, but also a sound economic policy decision for Maryland's future workforce.

Importantly, access to menstrual products is both an equity and a gender equity issue. Girls and other students who menstruate, including transgender and nonbinary youth, may miss class or experience stigma when products are unavailable. Students from low-income households, students experiencing housing instability, and students whose families are facing economic disruptions are disproportionately affected by period product insecurity. Research also shows that communities of color experience higher rates of economic hardship and material insecurity, compounding disparities in access to essential health items. Schools serve as a primary point of stability and support for many young people, and ensuring consistent access to menstrual hygiene products helps reduce gender- and race-based disparities while promoting educational equity and student dignity.

⁶ Schmitt, M. L., Dimond, K., Maroko, A. R., Phillips-Howard, P. A., Gruer, C., Berry, A., Nash, D., Kochhar, S., & Sommer, M. (2023). "I stretch them out as long as possible:" U.S. women's experiences of menstrual product insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Women's Health*, 23(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02333-z>

⁷ *Social Security Administration*. The United States Social Security Administration. (n.d.).
https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/research-summaries/education-earnings.html?utm_

House Bill 541 represents a practical, low-cost, and evidence-based policy solution. By clarifying responsibility for restocking menstrual hygiene product dispensers, the bill ensures that existing access requirements function as intended and that students are not forced to miss class time or seek assistance simply to meet a basic health need.

For these reasons, Reproductive Justice Maryland Action strongly supports Senate Bill 307 and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.