



Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 157, An Act Concerning the Provision of Free Feminine Hygiene Products in Middle and High School Student Bathrooms

Senator Moore, Representative Linehan, Ranking Members Kelly and Green, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 157, An Act Concerning the Provision of Free Feminine Hygiene Products in Middle and High School Student Bathrooms. We strongly encourage the committee to support Senate Bill 157.

On any given day, 800,000,000 people on the planet are menstruating. At least 500,000,000 of these people lack adequate resources – from supplies to facilities to information – for managing their periods.¹ Access in the U.S. is slightly better, but approximately one in five American teenagers has lost educational opportunities because of lack of menstrual products and support.² Even missing a few days of school can lead to performance gaps, particularly when students' obstacles also include poverty and racism.³ Lack of access to adequate period products also has health impacts: inadequate products can cause infections and

¹ 25 Years: Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water, 2015 Update and MDG Assessment. UNICEF and World Health Organization (2015), *available at* http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_on_Sanitation_and_Drinking_Water_2015_Update_.pdf.

² Heather Koball and Yang Jiang, "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children." National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (Jan. 2018) *available at*, http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1194.html.

³ See Emma García & Elaine Weiss, "Student Absenteeism." Economic Policy Institute (Sept. 25, 2018), *available at* <https://www.epi.org/publication/student-absenteeism-who-misses-school-and-how-missing-schoolmatters-for-performance/>.

toxic shock syndrome, which can lead to increased susceptibility to STIs and hysterectomies.⁴

We cannot have full and equitable participation in society by women and other people who menstruate unless we ensure safe and affordable access to menstrual products to everyone who needs them. Without universal affordable access, people with periods will lose the full ability to work, get an education, and live a complete civic and social life.

For these reasons, Senate Bill 157 is vital to ensure equal educational opportunities for people who menstruate. This bill, however, should not exclude anyone with a period. Connecticut schools affirm students' gender identities⁵ and thus recognize that there may be boys and non-binary students who have periods but do not use the girls' bathrooms. In recognition of the variety of people who have periods, we encourage this Committee to include the free period products this bill contemplates in all middle and high school bathrooms. We urge this Committee to amend Senate Bill 157 to specify that menstrual products should be available in all bathrooms in middle and high schools, regardless of gender, and to support the bill with this amendment.

⁴ See Rochaun Meadows-Fernandez, "Getting Your Period Can Be a Pain. Getting It While Homeless Is Even Worse," *Yes Magazine* (Jul. 27, 2017), *available at* <https://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/getting-your-period-can-be-a-pain-getting-it-while-homeless-is-even-worse-20170727>. *See also* "The Facts on Tampons – and How to Use Them Safely." U.S. Food & Drug Admin. (Sept. 12, 2018), *available at* <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/facts-tampons-and-how-use-them-safely>.

⁵ *See* Connecticut Safe School Coalition, "Guidelines for Connecticut Schools to Comply with Gender Identity and Expression Non-Discrimination Laws." Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (Apr. 2012), *available at* http://www.ct.gov/chro/lib/chro/Guidelines_for_Schools_on_Gender_Identity_and_Expression_final_4-24-12.pdf.