



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW**  
**Director, Public Policy, Advocacy & Strategic Engagement**  
**Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.**

**In support of raised *Senate Bill 216 An Act Expanding the Sales Tax Exemption to Include Feminine Hygiene Products & Disposable or Reusable Diapers***

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and honorable members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Director of Public Policy, Advocacy & Strategic Engagement at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of raised *Senate Bill 216 An Act Expanding the Sales Tax Exemption to Include Feminine Hygiene Products & Disposable or Reusable Diapers*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 64,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services in 17 health centers across the state. As a health care provider and advocate, Planned Parenthood's top priority is ensuring that all individuals have access to the health care and information they need, including the full range of reproductive health services, to make positive sexual and reproductive health decisions.

It's time to remove the tax on products that are part of essential care for people who menstruate because they are born biologically female. Menstruation usually begins when a female is between 9 and 16 years old and continues until she is 45 to 55. Menstrual flow usually lasts 3 to 7 days, but it may be slightly shorter or longer. Medical providers recommend changing your tampon every 3 to 4 hours to avoid toxic shock syndrome. It should not be a financial burden for those who experience menstruation monthly to be forced to pay taxes on a product they need to care for themselves.

For families, diapers are a cost that can reach over \$100 per month which is not covered by the federal safety net programs WIC or SNAP.<sup>i</sup> A recent study from Yale University found that three in ten low income mothers are unable to afford an adequate supply of diapers. Since most childcare providers require parents to provide disposable diapers, inadequate diaper supply can affect a mother's ability to go to work or attend training programs. Without sufficient diapers, mothers are also more likely to experience depression and anxiety, which can also have long term effects on their children.<sup>ii</sup>

These taxes disproportionately impact women and this legislation will create more tax equity and fairness. We acknowledge that our state is facing fiscal challenges with the budget but the burden should not be put on the women and families in our state. Although the state currently considers feminine hygiene products "luxury goods", it's time to recognize that they are necessary products determined by our biological sex.

We urge you to support raised *Senate Bill 216 An Act Expanding the Sales Tax Exemption to Include Feminine Hygiene Products & Disposable or Reusable Diapers*. These products are critical to the health and wellbeing of women and families. We believe this is an issue of economic security for Connecticut women and families.

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<sup>i</sup> The Diaper Bank, Facts and Impacts: [http://www.thediaperbank.org/site/page/facts\\_and\\_impacts](http://www.thediaperbank.org/site/page/facts_and_impacts)

<sup>ii</sup> Hathaway, B. (2013), No money for diapers: A depressing reality for poor mothers  
<http://news.yale.edu/2013/07/29/no-money-diapers-depressing-reality-poor-mothers>