

H.B. No. 5272 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS.

Co-Chairs Representative Steinberg and Senator Daughetry Abrams, Ranking Members Representative Petit, Senator Hwang, and Senator Somers, and members of the committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in favor of this bill. My name is Asija Qyteza and I am a menstrual equity advocate for LiveGirl, a nonprofit organization fighting for gender equity, as well as the UConn Waterbury Associated Student Government President. I am testifying here before you today to exhibit strong support for **H.B. No. 5272 AN ACT CONCERNING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS**. I think it is crucial for this bill to be passed to address the concerns of every menstruator in CT who does not have access to menstrual products. As a LiveGirl menstrual equity advocate, I have had the privilege to work with Representative Kate Farrar and other legislators and advocates to raise awareness on the necessity of a menstrual equity bill.

As many of the Committee members know, 1 in 4 women and girls in the United States reports struggling to afford menstrual products. Working closely on this issue, I have met some of those girls that cannot afford menstrual products and I understand the negative impact it can have on their health.

To highlight the necessity of this bill, I want to tell you the story of one of my peers: I have a friend who moved to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic when she was 7 years old. She came from a household with a single mother and she had a younger brother that she had to take care of. Although the average age that a girl gets her period is 12 years old, she got her period at 9 years old, and this made her feel ashamed and isolated from other girls her age. She was scared to talk to her mom about her period because she felt embarrassed, and she would not always have access to pads in her house. This was further exacerbated by the fact that her mom was already struggling financially, and getting her period early meant having to buy more menstrual products, a burden that her family could not afford.

For a full time menstruator making minimum wage who earns approximately \$2,080 per month, affording menstrual products can be burdensome. For two menstruators in a household, menstrual products can cost \$168 a year. Organic menstrual products, which are deemed as the healthier choice, cost even more. Although this may seem like nothing for some people, for lower-income families this can really impact them.

I believe that free menstrual products in public institutions, as proposed in the bill, is a step in the right direction to achieve menstrual equity. Passing this bill will not only give menstruators access to products, but it is also essential to reducing and eliminating shame, empowering women and girls in our state, as well as creating a more open and understanding society. It is time for our society to move forward, past the stigma, and the best way to do that is through legal change. The issue of period poverty is extremely urgent and the provisions of this bill are necessary for this problem to be legally addressed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

X Asija Qyteza

Asija Qyteza

LiveGirl Advocate and UConn Waterbury Associated Student Government President