

## Nell O'Hara Testimony Menstrual Equality Bill

My name is Nell O'Hara and I am a current junior at the Baltimore School for the Arts and I also work with Bmore Happy Period, an initiative to distribute menstrual product kits and educate about periods and period poverty. Thank you for reading my testimony in support of the **House Bill 205 Public School – Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products – Requirement**.

If you were to enter a public school restroom, would you expect to see paper towels? Soap? Toilet paper? Yes. Would you not, then, expect to see menstrual product dispensers? Menstrual products are a basic hygiene product, and they need to be available the same as any basic hygiene product. Young people who menstruate have no choice but to deal with their periods. Dealing with them should not be something that inhibits them in school.

I remember in my middle school, a school with hundreds of students, there were maybe one or two menstrual product disposal bins in all of the restrooms and there were definitely no product dispensers. The trash can would sometimes be placed in the hallway, and there were multiple instances where I would have to dispose of my period waste in the hallway outside of the restroom. A handful of students brought this issue to the principal, requesting more disposal bins to be placed in the stalls. In the rest of my time at that school, nothing was done about the issue. There needs to be an intentional, concerted effort to make caring for periods easy and with as little discomfort or shame as possible. This bill will ensure that effort is made in public schools.

Periods already carry a lot of shame for students who menstruate. Making them go to the nurse and request pads or tampons or ask another student can be uncomfortable and reinforce that shame that they carry. These students should be able to enter their school's restroom and see a dispenser, as this bill proposes.

Access to period products is not a given for many students. Some students can't afford these products, or they do not have information about periods, or they do not have a Walmart or CVS near them to buy these products. Corner stores and smaller businesses often carry these products at higher prices. The place where these students spend so much of their time, school, should make access to these products very easy. Periods and managing them is challenging. These students are facing countless challenges already, this bill will make sure that one of these challenges is taken care of.

Thank you very much,  
Nell O'Hara