

House Health & Insurance  
 05/28/2021 Upon Adjournment  
 SB21-255 Free Menstrual Hygiene Products To Students  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Iris Jaramillo For Self	<p>Hello, my name is Iris Jaramillo and I am a current student at Regis University. I am on the pre-med track studying neuroscience with a minor in education.</p> <p>When I got the news this hearing was taking place I couldn't help but feel so excited. As Women's Rights Senator for my university's student government, I know the firm place I stand on free menstrual products to students. I also know of the constant concerns and well let's face it regulations one must do to bring this issue to be debated in a setting such as this. Before I further explain why I am for this bill, I would like to acknowledge the hard work that has been done in forming this bill, by the sponsors.</p> <p>During my time as student senator, I have found great setbacks in getting students free menstrual products. I applaud the efforts to continuously make positive change in this community. At first it was unbelievable that such an issue could cause so much conflict to me because the issue is quite simple.</p> <p>Some students can't afford education, food, and other necessities. Denying them the ability to check off a rather expensive need for those who identify as needing menstrual products is obstructing them from a fair education. If we want students to excel academically, and mentally we must obliterate the unnecessary barriers like having to pay for menstrual products they can't afford.</p> <p>I sincerely hope the people here today that are able to state change, see the need for this bill to happen. In doing so giving students a chance to not feel the burden they already face in the lack of funds as they better themselves as an individual.</p> <p>I greatly appreciate your time, and your service to the State of Colorado.            Iris Jaramillo</p>

My name is Katey Funderburgh. I am 22, a Colorado native, and a recent graduate of Regis University.

Thank you for allowing me to give this written testimony today. I am in strong favor of bill SB21-225, sponsored by Senator Winter and Representative Herod, to provide free menstrual hygiene products to students in Colorado.

Last year, I served in the Regis University Student Government Association as the Vice President of Representation, meaning that I chaired Student Senate meetings and met regularly with the student body to hear their concerns and advocate for their needs to our administration.

In September of 2020, I helped a handful of Student Senators begin their own bill to bring free menstrual products to our campus. Locally, we were learning of period poverty as it intersects with the many manifestations of classism in America and on our Regis campus. Guided by our school values of caring for the whole person and standing in solidarity with one another, we listened to our peers and realized that one of the greatest issues facing students was the financial burden of menstrual hygiene products. Many students reported personal budgets that required sacrifice just to afford a box of tampons-- buying these necessary things meant that they would need to skip lunch that day, or hold off on buying that textbook. Students-- specifically, students with periods-- were digging in the cracks of dorm couches for change to stretch their dollars. These Senators knew that something needed to be done. I was proud to help them.

We were not the first to attempt to write and pass a Period Product Bill. At Regis, this bill has been introduced at least three times prior to the 2020/2021 governmental body. And each of those historical times, it has failed. Not because Student Senators didn't lay the correct groundwork for the bill to survive. Not because other Student Government members wouldn't vote in favor. Not even because we lacked the resources to implement it. The Period Product Bill of Regis University has failed three times because it is a radical act of love and care for student wellbeing that cannot sustain itself without outside help. Student Senators couldn't carry the work by themselves. They needed the help of their surrounding community, of the adults that run our school and our country. They needed to be heard, listened to, respected, and supported.

So when my Senators began working on the Period Product Bill at Regis University this year, we knew that we would need much more help than we've been able to garner in the past. Their work has been careful, deliberate, intentional, without ever losing sight of the needs of the people they represent. But we know that their work won't survive without a narrative shift of what it means to advocate for those with periods, especially youth with periods who experience poverty. This bill is that shift. By voting for it, you are rewriting history, making up for all the years that student leaders have tried to do the very thing that you are. Today, I have the opportunity to write to you all, to speak to the needs of the people I have been charged with

leading. I know a college Student Government pales in its power in comparison to yours. But we are still strong. We still have work to do, and we cannot do it alone. We need you.

To me, this bill isn't just about money allocated for tampons and pads. This is about generations of students who have been standing in solidarity with their peers. It's about listening to the women around us and actually hearing what they say. It's about fighting for their needs and validating their experiences. And perhaps most importantly, it's about curbing poverty and contributing to an end of the generational disparities that keep students digging in couch cushions just to afford products that should be freely available.

Thank you for allowing me to share this written testimony with you today. I urge you to take some inspiration from the Regis University students who have been fighting for this bill on a local level. I urge you to vote in favor of bill SB21-225.

**Written Testimony as prepared for delivery in support to SB21-255 – Free Menstrual Hygiene Products To Students (Winter & Herod/ Titone) to the House Health and Insurance Committee by Samantha Espinoza, Senior Policy Analyst for Health Equity at the Colorado Children’s Campaign**

May 28, 2021

- Thank you Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Sam Espinoza. I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Health Equity at the Colorado Children’s Campaign.
- I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB 255 and am thankful to the bill sponsors for bringing this bill forward.
- We support this bill because it will remove economic barriers for students accessing necessary health products at school, helps address social stigma around menstrual hygiene and ensures period products are available to ALL students in middle, junior and high school regardless of gender identity.
- And, we think this is an important piece of legislation because we know it was developed in partnership with those closest to the issue, Colorado students.
- Not only is policy stronger when it is informed by the community it seeks to serve and driven forward by those experiencing the problem, its also good for kids.
- Research indicates that young people are surrounded by a variety of opportunities to engage in intentional, productive, and constructive ways, are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and show higher rates of successful transitions into adulthood.
- To explain, the several stakeholder meetings held throughout the bill development process – from inception to policy introduction, were largely attended and convened by young people.
- Lastly, in addition to our gratitude for the providing young people with a positive and meaningful civic engagement opportunity, we wanted to appreciate the sponsors for the thoughtful language to assist the Colorado Department of Education in disseminating grant funds equitably – namely prioritizing schools that have some of the greatest needs.
- SB 255 would provide more students access to feminine hygiene products, free of cost, begin to address social stigma and with that, we urge your support for this bill.
- Thank you

Dear House Health & Insurance Committee,

There are many student-related initiatives that Colorado legislators have passed or proposed that are neither strictly necessary nor clearly within the realm of the state's purview. In 2019 alone, Colorado lawmakers passed a [grant program](#) to promote computer science education in low-income schools, [an act](#) to increase access to social workers for K-5<sup>th</sup> students, a [grant program](#) to increase and improve physical education programming, and various others. So, when Colorado legislators have an opportunity to increase access to feminine hygiene products in lower-income schools, I'd like to know how this any different,

Legislative [Opponents](#) of SB21-255 say that funding for such initiatives should be the school's, rather than state government's, responsibility. Yet this same government has also decided that students and schools need better access to computer science, more mental health resources, and better physical education programming. Unlike access to clean water, food, or restrooms, none of the aforementioned programs rise to a level of humanitarian concern. As such, the state does not necessarily need to step in. However, each of those bills passed because the state acknowledged a gap in educational resources and recognized that they had the power to fund or create access to funding.

With Julia.Group@state.co.us, the state has a similar opportunity and the solution is relatively straightforward. Unlike funding teachers and technology to improve computer science access, for example, here the answer is simply purchasing and making available feminine hygiene products. Both are grant programs, but one has a much more complicated implementation process. Unlike the computer science bill, however, SB21-255 does not only provide students with an opportunity, it also allows them to maintain a basic sense of hygiene and dignity.

Suppose the state took a similar approach to funding toilet paper or hand soap in public schools, an education system that relies heavily on government funding. Each student had to bring his or her own roll of toilet paper and soap to school every day. If a student forgot, they would have to ask classmates or teachers each time they wanted to use the restroom. Then, if a school wanted to make either item available to its students, they would have to find space in their already strapped budgets. The idea sounds ludicrous because we have deemed such hygiene product essential. Feminine hygiene products are no different.

Many young women in poverty are likely unable to ask their families to pay for these resources, they are embarrassed to ask others for assistance, and the schools cannot provide funding. So, because of their socioeconomic circumstances, these young women are subjected to humiliation or shame. Imagine walking into a middle school classroom with a bloodstain on your pants. You did not come to school with a tampon because your parents could not afford one or could not get to the store in time because they work full time jobs. You did not ask another student because, at 12-years-old, you were embarrassed; or the students around you were in a similar financial situation. So, you walk into class with a red splotch on your behind and some boy in the back of the class points and snickers. Your face flushes and you rush out of the class without returning.

Enacting SB21-255 would alleviate this hypothetical in a number of ways. Importantly, it would also eliminate a barrier to education and an unnecessary distraction. When students, especially young girls, feel self-conscious about their bodies, their education suffers. [A study](#) from 2017 found that, "physical appearance or body image did affect academic achievement or scholastic accomplishment...students

showed concerns regarding self-image, they get distressed due to physical appearance, further, their physical appearance also interfere in getting education and performing daily tasks”. This shows that when students are forced to think about how others perceive them, their academic performance is hindered.

Young women in low-income communities face so many barriers throughout their academic journeys. Some of these obstacles, like homelessness or volatile family circumstances, are not easily surmounted or would require a level of funding that is beyond the realm of feasible for a single bill. Creating access to tampons and pads in public school bathrooms, however, presents neither of these issues. I urge you to follow in the footsteps of the states who have already passed similar initiatives ([WA](#), [CA](#), [DE](#), [IL](#), [NY](#), [NH](#), [MD](#), [GA](#)) and the countless others whose legislators are currently contemplating bills to provide free feminine products to schools.

My name is Julia Trujillo. I graduated from Arvada West High School in 2020 and was one of the Intersectional Feminist Club students who initially approached Representative Titone about addressing the lack of access to menstrual products in schools through legislation.

I strongly believe that Senate Bill 255 is an important and needed step to address the period poverty and stigma that too many young students face surrounding their period.

Menstruation is incredibly stigmatized in our culture, and this extends into our classrooms. In most schools, like mine prior to our advocacy, menstrual products are hidden away in clinics or teachers' classrooms--the implication being that a period is some kind of sickness or public event, instead of a *normal* bodily function to handle in the privacy of a restroom.

A really telling statistic that demonstrates period stigma is from a 2017 BBC report that found 49% of 14-to-21-year-olds have missed an entire day of school because of their period and of them, 59% have made up an alternative excuse. Students feeling the need to lie about their period demonstrates this stigma in action.

In my own high school, my club's advocacy for menstrual products in our student restrooms was supported by so many students who personally experienced leaving or missing school because they didn't have access to products to handle their cycles in school with dignity and efficiency.

We treat period products like a luxury instead of the basic hygiene necessity that they are. We don't expect minors to provide their own toilet paper, soap, or paper towels because these needs are universal. Yet half the population has a period and they have no say in the matter. If cis-gendered men had periods, I believe we would see menstrual products in every school and public restroom, and this conversation wouldn't even have to take place.

If we take steps to provide free, accessible menstrual products in schools, we can begin to break down these deeply ingrained social barriers. We need legislative initiatives like this one for the students everywhere whose periods are forcing them to miss school, choose tampons over meals, and experience shame about their inability to afford period products. By normalizing periods and providing for menstruating minors, it will become easier for us to see periods as a shameless aspect of life that we view through a lens of public health and safety.

I strongly urge you to support this critical cause and thank you for your time.