



**Testimony of Jaime Miracle,
Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio,
to the House Ways and Means Committee
Supporting House Bill 61
October 10, 2017**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Jaime Miracle. I am the deputy director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. I am here to speak in full support of House Bill 61 on behalf of our more than 40,000 activists and members in Ohio.

House Bill 61 is a simple bill, and should be something we can all easily agree is a good thing. It removes the sales tax from items that are critical to the health and well-being of women: tampons, pads, and other items that are related to menstruation. Just a few weeks ago, the Ohio House voted to exempt eyeglasses from state sales tax. Late each summer, the state does a sales tax holiday for back to school related items. Food, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment are exempt from sales tax because the legislature has already deemed them necessary to be healthy and thrive. For any woman who experiences a menstrual period, tampons, pads and similar items are very much necessities and it's only logical that the State of Ohio should also them on the list of items exempt from state sales tax.

Without access to tampons, pads, and other items, women are forced to re-use feminine hygiene products that were meant for one time use, or to leave these products in for longer than is recommended by physicians leaving her at risk for infection. In a worst case scenario, a woman who doesn't have access to these products could be forced to stay home from work or school during her menstrual period each month, losing valuable income, or missing out on critical educational opportunities.

Women already face a pay gap that adds up to about \$10,470 per year. In fact, Ohio's wage gap is higher than the national average. Ohio has the 10th highest wage gap for women.¹ Forcing Ohio women to then pay sales tax on an item that only women must purchase, and is a medically necessary item for any woman who still experiences a menstrual cycle, is an additional burden that need not exist in our state.

The State of Ohio should be doing all it can to keep its citizens safe and healthy. Many of those are highly complicated things with lots of debate on both sides of the issue. This is not one of those things. This is a simple, easy thing the State of Ohio can do to help its citizens stay healthy. I urge you to vote yes on H.B. 61. I hope that this is just the beginning of the process to make these items more accessible and affordable to lower income women in our state.

¹ America's Women and the Wage Gap (April 2017) by the National Partnership for Women and Families.
<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>