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State Representative

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Lipps, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 19, which will exempt tampons and other hygiene products related to menstruation from the state sales and use tax.

In the past, this committee has worked honorably and diligently to address the inequity of taxing products related to health. And as a General Assembly, we have largely supported the notion that the state should not make a profit from the purchase of medical necessities. The issue of making medically necessary products more accessible is not Republican or Democratic, and even this issue of making feminine hygiene products more accessible is not about men versus women. It is not political to want a better life for women and their families, as political party preference does not determine if you need a tampon.

On average, a woman will endure some 456 total periods or roughly 6.25 years of her life. During this time, as part of this natural process, the average woman will spend [thousands of dollars](#) on feminine hygiene products to ensure a healthy and productive lifestyle. Too many hardworking Ohioans – and too many hardworking Americans - are struggling to make ends meet, and we should not further this burden by taxing the purchase of products necessary for women and their medical well-being.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to equip people with the tools they need to build a better life. Just as prescription eyewear for those who require it is essential to be healthy and productive, so is having access to sanitary products while menstruating. While a prescription is not necessary for feminine hygiene products, fem care is necessary to provide the ability to lead a healthful life, to regularly attend school, work, or personal events, and fully participate in one's community.

Imagine not being able to concentrate in school or being distracted at work simply because you did not have access to - or could not afford to - purchase the appropriate and necessary medical hygiene products as state and local sales taxes can add more than [eight percent](#) to the cost of products in Ohio. In fact, according to a survey of 90,000 women from fertility app Clue, 18% of respondents missed school, work, or an event simply because they were afraid of someone discovering that they were on their period.¹ Worse yet, women who are forced to use unclean

¹ <http://www.helloclue.com/survey.html>

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feminine hygiene products or do not change them frequently enough can develop irritations or infections leading to even more serious health problems.²

As a recent article in the Los Angeles Times said: *“Imagine being down on your luck, having to figure out how to feed your family. Then image you are a woman of childbearing age. Which means you have monthly menstrual periods. Where do tampons and sanitary pads fit on a list of needs when your kids are hungry? But how do you function, even look for work?”*³

By exempting feminine hygiene products from the sales tax, thousands of Ohio women and families will benefit. I understand the concerns of revenue loss should the state choose to no longer tax feminine hygiene products, but these dollars would be placed directly back into the pockets of Ohio’s residents to spend in our economy. Furthermore, the loss of revenue has been estimated at merely \$4 million per year - a minuscule amount compared to similar tax exemptions.

Ohio – and the thirty-five other states that still tax these medical necessities - should join the [fifteen states](#), [five countries](#) and the District of Columbia and exempt feminine hygiene from the sales tax. I welcome the opportunity to work with my colleagues to find fiscally responsible ways to incorporate this just and logical tax policy into our budget or tax code.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important piece of legislation. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

² <http://www.sswm.info/content/menstrual-hygiene-management>

³ <http://www.latimes.com/socal/weekend/news/tn-wknd-et-0228-feminine-products-20160221-story.html>

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