



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
CINCINNATI

PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF:

Jamie Stinson
Senior Delegate for SPAC
Junior League of Cincinnati

IN SUPPORT OF:

HB 19 — Sales Tax
Exempt feminine hygiene products from sales tax
House Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Lipps, Ranking Member Rogers and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 19 which would exempt feminine hygiene products from sales tax in the state of Ohio.

My name is Jamie Stinson, and I'm testifying as a representative of the Junior League of Cincinnati. The Junior League is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. We have served the Greater Cincinnati area for just about 100 years, incubating and impacting over 120 programs including Mindpeace and Pro Kids. Last year I co-chaired our program development committee, which involved an 18 month process where we researched needs in our community and interviewed community partners. At the conclusion of this process, we chose Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank as our new partner organization. Through our research and our partnership with Sweet Cheeks, we have become aware of the dire need for feminine hygiene products in our area, and how this tax is unfairly impacting the women in our community.

Based on a survey done by Kotex, 39% of women have struggled with buying feminine hygiene products due to lack of income at some point in their lives. 24% of women have struggled within the last year. 41% have had to take action including stretching product use, using a substitute, or borrowing from a friend. In fact, 1 in 5 low income women report missing work, school, or similar events due to lack of access to period supplies. Please note that state and federal safety-net programs cannot be used to purchase period supplies. This bill could not only save women more than \$600 over the course of their lives, but it could also raise awareness of the necessity for access to feminine hygiene products.

In the state of Ohio, 51% of our population is comprised of women, so this would have a huge impact on many individuals in our state. We women pay an estimated \$4 million a year in tax for feminine hygiene products. This is significant, because in Ohio, the average male salary is slightly over \$61,000, while the average female salary is slightly over \$45,000, making this a discrepancy of over \$16,000 a year. So not only are we being taxed unfairly, but our salaries are also not equitable. Furthermore, women ages 18-24 are the largest demographic living in poverty, and the third largest is women ages 25-34, which are ages that most likely require the purchase of feminine hygiene products. Furthermore, women ages 25-34 are the largest age group with no healthcare coverage in Ohio. Nationally, this same age is the age group most likely to have coverage! These women are often not even able to speak to a gynecologist about their lack of access to supplies that they need. This is a travesty for our women.

Inadequate menstrual hygiene has been associated with infections, poor health, and negative quality of life as well as high school rates of absenteeism, missed activities among urban adolescents, and missed employment. For many women in our state, lack of access to feminine hygiene products results in a barrier to their social and economic participation both in school and the workforce. When New York City added dispensers for free feminine hygiene products in some public schools in 2016, attendance increased 2.4 percent. Anyone who has worked in a school system knows that while this number may appear small, it actually demonstrates a significant increase.

Almost every woman will need approximately 40 years of feminine hygiene products. This amounts to over 9,000 tampons over a woman's lifetime, which is over 250 boxes of tampons. This does not include the cost of medications that may come with having a period, such as birth control to help regulate them, pain medications, et cetera. Since these products are only used by women and are a necessity, the tax disproportionately affects women, and that is discriminatory. Women can't just stop having a period because they don't have money; it's not a choice.

In Cincinnati, According to the U.S. Census data and the Ohio Development Agency's Ohio Poverty Report in 2018, 29.9% of Cincinnatians live in poverty. That's more than 85,000 people. Nationally, Cincinnati is among the top 15 poorest cities in the country with a population of 250,000 or more. This means that 1 in 3 Cincinnatians fall below the poverty line, and Cincinnati's poverty rate is almost twice the national average. As of 2015, 39% of Cincinnati's homeless population is female, and many of these women require feminine hygiene supplies.

Right now there are currently 15 states in America that do not have sales tax on feminine hygiene products. There are also 5 countries who have reportedly stopped taxing menstrual products according to ABC, including Canada, Kenya, India, Malaysia, and Australia.

Let's nix the tampon tax and stop forcing women to pay extra money on items that they need in order to live a healthy, productive life. The National Summit for Period Leadership will be held on October 23rd in Cincinnati, Ohio. How amazing would it be to be able to announce this year that Ohio has made feminine hygiene products tax exempt! We hope you will recognize what an essential bill this is to the women of the state of Ohio and ask that you please support HB 19 and vote to eliminate the tampon tax.