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Committees

Correctional Institution
Inspection Committee
(Vice Chair)
Government Oversight
(Ranking Member)
Energy
Community
Revitalization
Public Safety

Good afternoon, Chair Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, and all other members of the Government Oversight Committee.

I am here today to present House Bill 29, a crucial piece of legislation that ensures all incarcerated women in Ohio have access to free feminine hygiene products in correctional facilities.

This bill passed the Ohio House unanimously 2x's last session but unfortunately stalled in the Senate and conference committee. Today, we are reintroducing it to codify protections that will ensure women have adequate access to Menstrual products while they serve their time.

When I first learned about this issue, I spoke with key stakeholders, including the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC). As a result of these discussions, ODRC issued a variance in November 2022 to ensure incarcerated women receive necessary hygiene products. However, a variance is not permanent—it can be rescinded at any time. HB30 ensures these protections remain law, safeguarding the dignity and health of incarcerated women regardless of future administrative changes.

This Legislation will:

1. Mandate the provision of feminine hygiene products in All correctional facilities—local, county, and state— at no cost.
2. Prohibit denying hygiene products, ensuring no inmate is forced to go without basic necessities.
3. Requires facilities to implement formal policies governing the distribution and disposal of hygiene products.
4. Requires correctional facilities to allow at least one shower per day for menstruating inmates, even if they are in disciplinary segregation.
5. Includes an emergency clause to account for prison lockdowns, natural disasters, and other critical situations.

Currently, there is no Ohio law requiring jails and prisons to provide feminine hygiene products. Menstruation is a natural, involuntary function, and proper menstrual care is essential for health, hygiene, and dignity.

Women across Ohio have shared their experiences of managing their cycles while incarcerated, describing:

- Having to use rags, mattress padding, or paper when they lack access to products.
- Feeling humiliation after soiling their clothing due to inadequate supplies.
- Being forced to trade, steal, or fight for basic hygiene products.

The absence of a formal policy leaves decisions to the discretion of prison staff, creating inconsistencies and opportunities for abuse. Some inmates receive hygiene products without issue, while others must beg or face punishment. HB29 removes this arbitrary discretion and ensures every incarcerated woman is treated with dignity and fairness.

This legislation has been thoroughly vetted and refined through bipartisan collaboration. It has the full support of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and aligns with national standards for correctional healthcare. Passing HB29 is not just about fairness—it's about demonstrating Ohio's commitment to humane treatment and basic public health. I urge each of you to support this important legislation and help us get it across the finish line.

Thank you again to my joint sponsor Marilyn John for joining me on this fight and thank you again, Mr. Chairman Hall, and members of the Government Oversight Committee. I humbly ask for your support in passing HB29. I am happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.