

Chair, Thomas Hall; Vice Chair, Ron Ferguson; Ranking member of the committee, Latyna Humphrey; and all other members of the committee, my name is Jessica Grieco. My name is Jessica Grieco. I'm here today as a proponent of House Bill 29. As a formally incarcerated individual, I spent 22 months in the Montgomery County jail and then more than 6 years at The Ohio Reformatory for Women. I was a GED tutor and the sole legal aide for a prison of 3,000 women. I was released on February 1st of this year. While incarcerated, I was dismayed to see how women were treated when experiencing their monthly cycle.

In county jail, some women were placed in a "cold cell." This is a concrete room with a concrete slab to sleep on. If you are placed in a cold cell on suicide watch (or any kind of watch), you are not permitted clothing. Therefore, you have nowhere to place a sanitary pad and are left to bleed all over the cell. Tampons are not provided in the county jail setting. Once moved to a pod, you then must rely on the varying degrees of common decency of correctional staff to get pads. Your next hurdle is acquiring underwear to place your pad in. If you had underwear on when arrested, you usually get to keep them. County jails do not issue underwear. If you have no money on your account with which to buy panties on commissary, you must ask the chaplain for a pair. If he or she has some, you're fortunate. Most women are forced to try to anchor the pad into their county-issued pants.

Currently, in a prison setting, if you are not on restrictive housing, it doesn't seem to be an issue to get feminine hygiene products. But, for inmates in restrictive housing, they must rely on the varying degrees of common decency of correctional staff. I have witnessed correction officers intentionally not give inmates in restrictive housing items like pads, toilet paper, and other necessities. Showers are also withheld, sometimes for days, especially if inmates are perceived as being rude. Inmates have no choice but to yell to get a guard's attention for requests as they do not personally have access to them. In this case, a person will be intentionally ignored to be taught a lesson. Informal complaints and grievances filed regarding these issues provoke retaliation and are completely ignored by supervising officers.

Period blood is a biohazard material. At no point in time should other people be exposed to it, especially given the rate of hepatitis C and other illnesses in the incarcerated population. At the end of the day, it is other inmates who are forced by staff to clean blood from the cells and floors sometimes without proper cleaners or personal protective equipment like gloves. In a county setting, no inmate is trained in proper biohazard cleanup procedure.

Daily showers for inmates especially those on their cycle should be an absolute. Clearly, any standards regarding showers is being ignored, showing the inherent need for this crucial bill. Today, I ask you to support treating incarcerated women like regular people like yourselves. Please see us as the women, mothers, aunts, and sisters that we are. Thank you for taking this stand towards our ongoing health, hygiene, and dignity.