

Testimony in Support of House Bill 29
Submitted by (Anonymous - Name Withheld)
April 8, 2025

Honorable Legislative Members,

For five years, I served as a healthcare provider at several correctional facilities including at a women's prison. During my time in this role, I routinely assessed and provided medical care to incarcerated women, seeing an average of 20 to 30 patients per day. I treated thousands of women and one of the most common health issues I encountered was infections of various types.

Infections are rampant in prison and difficult to control due to overcrowding. But one of the most preventable infections I came across was those that stemmed from making your own tampons and pads. The sanitary pads that were “free” in prison were small, uncomfortable, and difficult to get, and tampons (of any kind) had to be bought at the commissary. These cost about \$4 to \$5 dollars a box inside. So, the women would make their own tampons using wads of toilet paper and the lining of the free pads. Let’s be clear - if you are incarcerated and lucky enough to get a full-time job in the prison system, you may get 14-20 dollars a month. So, an incarcerated woman would spend about a quarter to a third of their monthly income on tampons each month. Does any woman in this courtroom pay a quarter to a third of their monthly income on menstruation products? No.

So, numerous women would come to Nurse Sick Call because they had made their own tampons due to period poverty and now have a vaginal infection. It is more humane, ethical, and much cheaper to pay for tampons than for antibiotics. We further punish incarcerated women for their lack of ability to pay for tampons. These infections can be prevented – ensuring safe, clean access to a variety of menstruation products is an important public health and infection control measure. The issue of period poverty is not just an economic or social issue—it is a public health concern that directly impacts the well-being of incarcerated individuals.

In conclusion, ensuring that incarcerated women have access to a variety of menstrual products is a necessary step in improving public health and infection control in correctional facilities. It is a straightforward and vital measure that can significantly reduce avoidable health complications and improve the overall well-being of incarcerated women.