



House Bill 134 seeks to place free menstrual products in public schools



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A bill seeking to create menstrual equity in schools by providing free menstrual hygiene products in New Mexico public schools will be introduced on Monday, Jan. 30: House Bill 134, titled “Menstrual Products in School Bathrooms.” The bill is sponsored by Reps. Christine Trujillo and Kristina Ortez and will be introduced first to the House education committee with a proposed budget of \$3 million.

Noor Ali, an advocate for the bill, hopes that by providing free products, it will help students who may be forced to choose between purchasing menstrual care and other necessities. In 2021, 35% of children in New Mexico had parents who lacked secure employment, and 24% were living in poverty, according to Annie E. Casey Foundation. Across the United States, one in four teens have had to miss class due to a lack of period supplies, according to the Alliance for Period Supplies.

The idea behind the bill comes from Albuquerque Academy seniors Ali, Sophia Liem and Mireya Macías, advocates for menstrual equity that created a free menstrual products program at their private school. “(The bill will) mandate free access to period products in all New Mexico public schools ... in every girl's bathroom in middle and high schools, and one boys' bathroom per building and then a limited capacity in elementary schools, (there will be access to products),” Ali said.

Having made the decision to tackle menstrual inequity in public schools statewide, the students first drafted and proposed the legislation in New Mexico Youth and Government, an organization that provides students the opportunity to discuss issues and present legislation relevant to them and their communities. “We wrote up a mock legislation in New Mexico Youth and Government that got passed there. And from that point, we started reaching out to legislators,” Macías said. “We looked for people who were already



supportive in the menstrual equity (and) reproductive justice space. We found Christine Trujillo and Kristina Ortez, who are our main House sponsors.”

The bill is not Trujillo’s first time working on menstrual equity. In 2022, Trujillo sponsored successful measures to get taxes removed from menstrual products in New Mexico, which was heard in the Health and Human Services Committee. HB 134 will be heard in the House Education Committee.

“The reason for that is because it'll affect school districts. The dissemination of the money for the purchase of the products would flow from the Public Education Department to the public schools,” Trujillo said. If passed, the bill would go into effect on July 1. School districts will then have to request funding from the New Mexico Public Education Department to roll out the initiative in their respective institutions, according to Trujillo.

“The goal is for the superintendents to be aware that that money is available and then assign someone from the (school’s) administration to have that money in their line-item budget,” Trujillo said. “Because it involves purchasing the materials, putting up a container and all those things. The resources they’re developing include a website created to help spread awareness for the bill. The students also found 11 organizations to help sponsor the bill in the legislature.

Along with getting products in schools, the students want to focus on education and spreading awareness. For them, what came first was recognizing that menstrual inequity was not just affecting female-identifying persons.

“We were cognizant of the fact that menstruation is a very stigmatized issue, and we understand the intersectionality of it. This isn't just a woman's issue,” Macías said. “This issue exists for trans men, this issue exists for nonbinary folks and all sorts of folks in the state of New Mexico. So we're trying to educate. We're developing different resources.”

The seniors also are introducing and spreading a letter and call-in campaign to help advocate for Bill 134; both forms can be found on their website.

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