



## Pennsylvania House Passes Bill to Provide Free Menstrual Products in Schools

Legislation introduced by State Rep. Darisha Parker to establish a grant program for schools to provide free menstrual products to students has passed the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. The bill, known as House Bill 851, marks a significant step towards menstrual equity in the state.



Today, “We have fought tirelessly for menstrual equity for women and girls in Pennsylvania,” Parker said. “House Bill 851’s passage is a step closer to that goal. I never want another young girl entering womanhood to experience embarrassment or consider themselves as less than because of a natural biological process.”

House Bill 851 amends the Public-School Code of 1949. It establishes the Menstrual Hygiene Products Accessibility Grant Program and allocates funding to ensure these products are available to students. This initiative aims to provide essential support to students who might otherwise struggle to access necessary menstrual hygiene products.

Parker credited Gov. Josh Shapiro and First Lady Lori Shapiro for their advocacy on this issue. The governor’s annual budget proposal includes \$3 million to provide menstrual products for students, which helped galvanize support for the bill.

“I am incredibly grateful to everyone who helped move Pennsylvania women forward by fighting for and passing menstrual hygiene legislation,” Parker said. She also expressed special thanks to Lynette Medley, founder of No More Secrets, for her relentless advocacy.

The bill now moves to the state Senate Health and Human Services Committee. This committee is also reviewing another piece of legislation authored by Parker, House Bill 850. That bill seeks to allow women participating in SNAP or WIC to purchase menstrual products with those benefits. It is currently awaiting a vote in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

House Bill 850 proposes amendments to the Human Services Code of 1967, enabling public assistance programs to cover them. “I truly urge my colleagues in the Senate to move quickly on both pieces of legislation,” Parker said. “Not only at Gov. Shapiro’s request but for women and girls across the commonwealth.”

Advancing Menstrual Equity: Pennsylvania’s Progressive Initiatives



Providing free menstrual products in schools addresses the significant issue of menstrual equity. Many students face challenges accessing these essential items, which can affect their education and well-being. By ensuring that menstrual products are available in schools, Pennsylvania can help reduce absenteeism and allow students to focus on their studies rather than worrying about basic necessities.

Further, allowing SNAP and WIC participants to purchase menstrual products with these benefits represents a crucial step toward inclusivity and support for low-income women. Period poverty, or the inability to afford menstrual products, impacts countless women and girls. These legislative efforts aim to alleviate this burden and promote dignity and health.

The broader implications of these bills are substantial. They signal a growing recognition of menstrual equity as a fundamental right. When states enact such measures, they set a precedent for others to follow, potentially leading to nationwide reforms. This can help normalize conversations around menstruation, reduce stigma, and ensure that all individuals have access to the products they need.

In summary, the passage of House Bill 851 in the Pennsylvania House marks a significant victory for menstrual equity. With both House Bill 851 and House Bill 850 moving through the legislative process, Pennsylvania is taking meaningful steps to support women and girls. These efforts address both immediate needs and long-term equality, inspiring similar actions across the country and advancing the cause of menstrual justice.

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