

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 21 – H 5083
AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY –
FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS
February 2, 2021**

The ACLU of RI appreciates the opportunity to express our strong support for this legislation which would require the availability of no-cost menstrual hygiene products in both public schools and prisons in Rhode Island.

Expansive access to menstrual products is an issue of both health and dignity for individuals who menstruate. Particularly for those individuals who are lower income, the financial difficulty of accessing these products can force the reusing of products, the use of products for longer than intended, or the forgoing of products entirely. Statutorily providing a pathway for free access to these products is critical for both medical and psychological reasons and will ensure that the medical and hygienic needs of vulnerable populations in Rhode Island are appropriately met. Though it is our understanding that the Rhode Island Department of Corrections has been providing free menstrual products to inmates for a few years, we believe it is appropriate and important to codify this practice into state law.

We would only suggest one slight revision to this legislation. This legislation importantly would ensure the availability of feminine hygiene products in both gender-neutral and female-designated bathrooms. However, should no gender-neutral bathrooms be available, this could potentially exclude access to individuals who menstruate but who identify as male. We would urge that, for this reason, these products be available in all public-school bathrooms.

Thank you for your consideration, and we urge swift passage of this legislation.