End Period Poverty

Menstrual Equity Policy Brief

January, 2023

Introduction

Period poverty, defined as lack of access to period products (e.g., tampons and menstrual pads) is a widespread issue that directly impacts students' ability to get a full education by resulting in increased absenteeism. Additionally, period poverty indirectly impacts educational attainments through its correlation with increased depression and anxiety. HF 44/SF 50 would address the problem of period poverty by requiring all Minnesota public and charter schools to provide menstrual products to students and providing public funds for them via an increase to the school equipment budget, thereby ensuring that students who menstruate have access to the resources they need for an equal education.

What is the extent and impact of period poverty?

1 out of every 10 menstruating students miss school during their menstrual cycle due to lack of access to menstrual products and resources. The 2021 State of the Period, a national survey of over 1,000 students who menstruate conducted by Thinx Inc. and PERIOD, found that over 1 in 5 (23%) have struggled to afford period products or been unable to purchase them at all, and that and over 4 in 5 (84%) have either missed class or know someone who has because they did not have access to period products. Further, 3 in 5 students (59%) said they rarely or never have free period products in their school bathrooms, and more than 6 out of 10 (65%) said that they do not want to be at school when they have their periods.

What will the Menstrual Equity Bill do?

HF 44/SF 50 would:

1. Require all Minnesota public and charter schools to provide menstrual products in lavatories for students in grades 4 through 12.
2. Add $2 per pupil to the school equipment budget, for a total cost of $1.9 million.
3. Ensure that all Minnesota students have access to essential hygiene supplies when they use the bathroom.

Conclusions

We ensure that students have access to toilet paper, paper towels, soap, and bandages. We should ensure that all students have access to period products as well. This is a sensible investment, because proactively ensuring that students don't miss class due to period poverty is far less complicated and expensive than helping students who regularly miss school to catch up.

Notably, this bill promotes our schools' ability to invest in all students, since providing these products openly carries the added benefit of normalizing conversations around periods, thereby reducing the shame and stigma attached to this normal bodily function which impacts a full half of the population.