


Testimony in Support of HB2461
“Providing for Sales Tax Exemption for Hygiene Products”
Before the House Committee on Taxation

By Erica Nguyen and Nicole Springer of 
February 2, 2022

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Mason, Ranking Member Gartner, and Members of the House,

Thank you for allowing the public to testify on HB2461 in exempting sales tax on hygiene products. No Shame KC appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of removing the tax on hygiene products in Kansas.

No Shame KC is a grassroots organization that helps to provide menstrual and hygiene products to the underserved in our community. The stigma surrounding menstruation and the struggle to afford period products at one point was a key part in creating No Shame in September of 2020. In times of darkness we must generate more light, and that is what we aimed to do with No Shame. We want to ensure that everyone can manage their periods with safety and dignity. Our main message is to make sure everyone knows that there is no shame in having a period. We are very proud of our work here in Kansas City to help those struggling to afford menstrual products, but the need is far greater than our reach. Due to the highly stigmatized nature of the issue of period poverty, it is rarely talked about.

Managing menstruation "is a critical aspect of the lives and civic participation of more than half the population," and should be considered when making policy.¹ Menstrual hygiene products, which are used consistently by half of the population every single month for an average of 40 years² are classified as luxury items and are not exempt from this gender-biased tax. Supporting this bill would increase menstrual equity in our community and set a standard that menstrual products are not a luxury, but a medical necessity.

Sales tax hits the lowest income families the hardest. The tampon tax, which taxes menstrual products as non-essential items, places an additional burden and discrimination on people who menstruate by making items crucial for everyday life unaffordable for some. 10.6% of Kansas citizens live in poverty.³ People should not have to decide every month between buying food or hygiene products, both a necessity of many of our citizens. 18.3% of students enrolled in Kansas schools live below the poverty line.⁴ 67% of menstruating US students have missed out on school due to not having the needed period products⁵. Many of those who can't afford these products resort to unsafe materials to manage their periods or stretch out the life of an item by not changing out their menstrual products frequently enough, these are huge health risks, from urinary tract infections to toxic shock syndrome. Menstruation should not be the reason any person misses out on school or work, endangers their health, or suffers humiliation. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, 'the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members'.

Thank you again for holding a hearing on exempting sales tax on hygiene products. In order to ensure that poverty and sexism do not impede people's ability to participate fully in society, menstrual equity is a must. At a minimum, hygiene products should be exempted from sales tax. Doing away with the sales tax on a few items will not lift families out of poverty in and of itself, but it will provide some small relief. We believe this issue is much larger than finances, but one that touches on gender equality and human rights. Eliminating the tampon tax will allow Kansas to lead the way to a more inclusive future, one that respects and accepts people who menstruate as equals. What, how, and who we tax speaks volumes about what we value as a community and as a state. For all these reasons, we are asking you to sign this bill into place and support our cause.

We would be happy to answer any questions should you have them. You can contact us at noshamekc@gmail.com.

¹ Weiss-Wolf, Jennnifer. *Periods Gone Public*. New York City, Arcade Publishing, September 18, 2017.

² <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/your-menstrual-cycle#3>

³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/KS>

⁴ <https://www.welfareinfo.org/poverty-rate/kansas/>

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1243035/negative-impact-of-period-poverty-on-schooling/>