



February 7th 2022

To: House Taxation Committee

Proponent for HB 2461

Testimony from Trust Women Foundation

Thank you to the committee for their consideration of HB 2461, addressing sales tax on period products. Trust Women is a reproductive health care provider with health care clinics in Wichita and Oklahoma City. We also advocate for rights and justice issues relevant to reproductive health, and we are heartened to see legislation such as HB 2461 in the Kansas Statehouse.

Inequitable access to menstruation products is a health care crisis. A 2018 study found that 46% of the women they talked to could not afford to buy both food and menstrual hygiene products and 64% were unable to afford needed menstrual hygiene products the previous year.

A report from the ACLU, “The Unequal Price of Periods: Menstrual Equity in the United States”, goes into great detail on the social and economic consequences of lack of access to menstruation products for vulnerable and under-resourced demographics across the country. The report found that:

Menstrual products can be costly, and poverty poses a barrier to accessing them. People who menstruate can expect to spend upwards of \$1,000 over the course of their lifetime on menstrual products. For many, this means resorting to degrading and unhygienic options. For example, a recent study demonstrated that two-thirds of low-income women in St. Louis could not afford menstrual products during the previous year, instead using cloth, rags, diapers, or paper as a substitute. State and local sales taxes can further impede access, adding as much as 10 percent to the cost. This could put the price of a box of pads or tampons out of reach of people struggling to make ends meet.

[\(<https://www.aclu.org/report/unequal-price-periods>\)](https://www.aclu.org/report/unequal-price-periods)

Adverse health outcomes related to lack of access to menstrual products can be quite detrimental. According to the ACLU:

Resulting reproductive tract infections may lead to negative pregnancy outcomes and make individuals more susceptible to acquiring sexually transmitted infections, including Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is an incurable infection that can cause cervical cancer. Using tampons or other inserted materials for longer than recommended can also lead to the rare condition toxic shock syndrome, which can require a hysterectomy or even be fatal. (2)

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Stigma around menstruation can be harmfully exacerbated by perceived or actual accessibility issues:

Lack of access to menstrual products can also make people feel humiliated and powerless, resulting in stigmatization and exclusion. People may end up bleeding on themselves, their clothing, and places that they must sit or sleep. If they cannot replace the bloody items then they may have to use stained articles of clothing that also advertise their menstruation — in ways that exacerbate already problematic stigma and shame. (2)

The passage of HB 2461 is an opportunity for straightforward bipartisanship that benefits Republicans and Democrats alike. Barriers to access exist as much in our largest cities as they do rural parts of our state. Removal of the sales tax from period products would allow for more people to access menstrual products, benefitting their health, and access to education and employment.

Eliminating sales tax on menstruation products is an important first step to ensuring equitable access to these essential products. Upon passage of HB 2461, Kansas would join 13 other states that have exempted period products from the collection of sales tax. This would send a powerful message to Kansas women that their health matters, regardless of where they live or how much money they earn.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue. We are deeply grateful to the committee for taking this up, and we strongly recommend the passage of HB 2461.

Sincerely,

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