

TESTIMONY OF MARTHA TERHAAR
SOUTHWEST KANSAS THRIVING ADVOCATE
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TAXATION
IN SUPPORT OF HB 2461
FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Members of the House Committee on Taxation:

My name is Martha Terhaar; I am the Southwest Kansas Thriving Advocate for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed supports HB 2461. Ending the tax on hygiene products will address important equality and health issues that will help the people of Kansas to thrive. Access to affordable basic hygiene products is more important now than ever, as we continue to face the impact of COVID-19. It will save Kansans money while incentivizing improved health and hygiene.

People living in poverty are most affected by lack of access to hygiene products. In a recent study conducted in St. Louis, Missouri, 64% of low-income women reported being unable to afford menstrual hygiene products during the previous year.¹ 1/3 of women in the study reported resorting to the use of alternatives such as rags, toilet paper, or their children's diapers.

Another recent study of women attending college in the United States found that 14.2% were unable to adequately access feminine hygiene products in the past year, with an additional 10% experiencing it every month.² This same study also found that struggling with access to hygiene products was also significantly associated with depression, with the most severe depression being reported by those with the least access to hygiene products.

People who struggle to afford hygiene products not only experience the direct health consequences created by lack of access, they also disproportionately suffer the psychological impact of reusing products, using products for longer than indicated, or not using any products at all. They are also more likely to have to suffer the societal effects of lack of access including problems with attendance at work or school and the appearance of being unprofessional or

¹Sebert Kuhlmann, A., Peters Bergquist, E., Danjoint, D., & Wall, L. "Unmet Menstrual Hygiene Needs Among Low-Income Women." *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1097%2FAOG.0000000000003060>

²Cardoso, L., Scolese, A., Hamidaddin, A., & Gupta, J. "Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States." *BMC Women's Health*. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5>

unhygienic. Nobody in Kansas should have to miss school or work simply because they cannot afford hygiene products.

Kansas currently provides sales tax exemptions to a wide variety of products, such as gold and silver coins, game birds for hunting, and oil drill bits. Given their importance to fulfilling basic human needs, hygiene products should be added to this list.

We need to address the barriers people face in accessing hygiene products. This tax exemption is a smart policy solution that will help ensure more people have access to the basic necessities they need to thrive. For these reasons, Kansas Appleseed urges support for HB 2461.