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Senate Education

Kara Casey

Director of Economic Empowerment

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Kara Casey and I work for the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. The Network is in full support of S.32, we are members of the Menstrual Equity Coalition, a growing coalition of gender, youth reproductive justice and other advocacy organizations in support of increasing access to menstrual products in Vermont.

The Vermont Network is Vermont's federally recognized Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalition. We represent 15 independent, non-profit member organizations which provide advocacy and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Together these organizations provide 24-hour access to crisis hotlines, emergency shelter, youth and children's advocacy and prevention education in schools, serving every community in Vermont.

The Vermont Network's vision is a world where all people thrive, my specific focus is on economic justice. We believe that access to menstrual products is an economic and gender justice issue.

A recent study showed that 1 in 5 teens struggled to afford and purchase menstrual supplies. This lack of access in schools creates a strain on a young person's education and has potential health implications. 1 in 4 teens have missed class due to lack of access and 61% have worn a tampon or pad for more than 4 hours because they did not have enough access to period products (puts them at risk of infection and TSS). We know that in 99% of households experiencing domestic violence there is also financial abuse. This can include withholding income to buy necessary household products or withholding the products themselves. This can affect a young person's access to these products and contribute to what is called period poverty.

Beyond economics, there is a lot of stigma associated with menstruation. Providing menstrual products that are free and easily accessible in schools helps to prevent the embarrassment that many youth who menstruate feel when then they are unexpectedly in need of a pad or tampon. By stocking these products in bathrooms that are gender neutral and in bathrooms designed for females you would be helping to end the stigma, showing that they are just as much a necessity as other products such as toilet paper and hand soap.



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We urge you to support this bill, youth rely on supportive askable adults in their lives to help them navigate issues around healthy sexual development and this is one way schools can support their students to do that.