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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Ann Cummings  
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

**RE: Support of SB 53 – Exempting feminine hygiene products from the Vermont Sales and Use Tax**

Dear Chairwoman Cummings:

On behalf of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), the 140-year-old trade association representing the leading manufacturers of over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements, and consumer medical devices, I'm writing to express strong support for SB 53. This legislation expands access to feminine hygiene products for Vermont residents by exempting these critical medical devices from sales and use tax.

Feminine hygiene products such as pads, tampons, liners and others, are essential purchases for the vast majority women. Unfortunately, millions of women and girls face barriers to accessible, and affordable feminine hygiene products across the United States. According to a recent study published in the peer-reviewed journal *BMC Women's Health*, 14.2% of college-aged women had experienced period poverty in the past-year and therefore were not able to afford sanitary products. 10% of the young women experienced period poverty every month.<sup>1</sup> Period poverty is the prevalent phenomena of being unable to afford products such as pads, tampons, or liners to manage menstrual bleeding. The study explains the inability for many of these young women to afford menstrual health products to meet their monthly needs likely which impacts their mental well-being. Women spend an estimated \$6,360 on menstrual products in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

According to U-Report, a data collection system developed by UNICEF, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this problem as residents lose their incomes and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5#citeas>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.swnsdigital.com/2019/11/new-research-reveals-how-much-the-average-woman-spends-per-month-on-menstrual-products/>

public places that offer these products without charge are closed.<sup>3</sup> When individuals lack access to proper menstrual products, they could turn to using the same menstrual product for longer periods of time or alternatives such as paper towels or tissue paper. Prolonged use of these products or use of alternative products can lead to several health complications such as toxic shock syndrome, bacterial vaginosis, or yeast infections. Improved access to affordable menstrual products is needed to support Vermont women, and some in the transgender community who menstruate, to avoid these negative health consequences.

CHPA recognizes menstrual health and hygiene as a pressing public health issue. The sales tax exemption proposed in S.B. 53 would be an important step to increasing access and affordability to critical feminine hygiene products for Vermont residents. We applaud Senators Pearson, Lyons, Sirotkin and Hardy for filing S.B. 53 and we urge the Senate Committee on Finance to support its passage. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions on our position per the information below.

Respectfully submitted,



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cc: Senate Committee on Finance

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ureport.in/opinion/4258/>