



# Ohio bill would mandate free feminine hygiene products for inmates

By Ava Boldizar



COLUMBUS, Ohio ([WCMH](#)) – Former Ohio inmates and equality advocates are pushing for a bill that would require correctional institutions to provide free feminine hygiene products.

House Bill 29 would require all jails and prisons in the state that house women to provide an “adequate supply” of free pads and tampons in a “variety of sizes.” Sponsored by Reps. Latyna Humphrey (D-Columbus) and Marilyn John (R-Richland County), the bill also would require facilities to allow at least one shower a day for inmates who are menstruating.

“The absence of a formal policy leaves decisions to the discretion of prison staff, creating inconsistencies and opportunities for abuse,” Humphrey said at the bill’s first hearing. “Some inmates receive hygiene products without issue, while others must beg or face punishment.”

The bipartisan legislation, introduced in February, would also ban prisons from denying an inmates feminine hygiene products and require facilities to implement formal policies surrounding the distribution of the products. Humphrey introduced a similar bill in the last legislative session that passed the House unanimously but stalled in the Senate. The bill did not receive any opponent testimony. Kayelin Tiggs, who has led research projects for the U.S. Military, voiced her support for the legislation.

“Can you imagine having to use loose paper, dirty socks, cleaning rags, mattress padding, torn sheets or makeshift pads to prevent accidents, all because you are denied an adequate number of products,” Tiggs said in 2023 testimony. “This is the reality for thousands of women across the state.”

The current bill had its second hearing last week, where a dozen people conveyed their approval of the legislation. Ainslee Johnson-Brown, a representative with the nonprofit Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, expressed similar concerns about what items inmates may turn to when left without products.

“Lack of access to the necessary products forces menstruating individuals to resort to unhygienic alternatives – leading to infections, discomfort and worse,” Johnson-Brown said. “Access to menstrual products is a direct extension of Ohio’s obligation to maintain humane conditions within its correctional facilities.” Throughout testimony for both the current and former bill, multiple former female inmates detailed how they were often denied products, forced to use makeshift pads and how male guards would “humiliate” them or request “favors” when they asked for feminine products.



Currently, there is no Ohio law requiring jails and prisons to provide feminine hygiene products. In 2022, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction issued policy to ensure women receive free, unlimited feminine hygiene products. However, during testimony, multiple people claimed access is not always reliable. Humphrey additionally pointed out that a policy is not permanent, and can be rescinded at any time.

“HB30 ensures these protections remain law, safeguarding the dignity and health of incarcerated women regardless of future administrative changes,” Humphrey said.

If the legislation were to pass, Ohio would join 25 other states that have laws protecting menstrual products in correctional facilities, according to The Prison Flow Project. The bill awaits possible opposition testimony in the House’s Government Oversight Committee.

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