



Chairwoman Maloney and Congresswoman Meng Lead Colleagues in Commissioning First-Ever Federal Review of Access to Menstrual Products

Aug 10, 2022
Press Release

All New York Democratic Congresswomen Join Request for Government Accountability Office to Evaluate Menstrual Inequities Across the United States



Washington, D.C. (August 10, 2022)— Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman of the Committee on Oversight and Reform and Rep. Grace Meng, lead sponsor of the Menstrual Equity for All Act, led Rep. Nydia Velázquez, Rep. Yvette Clark, Rep. Kathleen Rice, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in sending a [letter](#) asking the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the accessibility and availability of menstrual products to inform legislative efforts to advance health and economic equity in the United States.

“On January 20, 2021, President Biden issued an Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” the Members wrote. “One of the stated goals of this order is ‘for agencies to recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity.’ The federal government can advance this goal by taking steps to ensure that menstrual products are accessible to every person who needs them.”

Approximately one-quarter of people living in the United States have menstrual cycles, and the average person uses 16,000 tampons in their lifetime. Yet, many people across the United States lack access to adequate and affordable menstrual supplies, leading them to often miss extended periods of school and work, to be socially isolated, or to choose between menstruating supplies and other necessities. The coronavirus pandemic only exacerbated these inequities.



People of color are more likely to experience a consistent lack of access to menstrual supplies because they disproportionately experience poverty, with one recent study showing that 50% of low-income students of color indicated that they wear pads and tampons well beyond recommended use because they cannot afford enough for an entire menstrual cycle. New York City and State have led the way in providing free menstrual products to students in need. However, there is currently no federal mandate for public schools and universities to provide students with free menstrual products. One recent [study](#) indicated that more than 10% of women attending college cannot afford menstrual products to meet their monthly needs.

Incarcerated people often go without adequate access to menstrual supplies because the facilities where they reside do not provide supplies or require people to pay for their own supplies. This long-standing health inequity jeopardizes the physical health and safety of incarcerated people across the United States.

To help inform legislative efforts to advance menstrual equity in the United States, the Members asked GAO to evaluate access to menstrual care products through federal programs and federally funded institutions. This includes a review of Medicaid coverage of menstrual products, coverage of menstrual products by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants, and Children Program, availability of menstrual products for incarcerated and detained populations, and access to free menstrual products at public colleges and universities.

<https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/chairwoman-maloney-and-congresswoman-meng-lead-colleagues-in-commissioning-first>