



**Delaware PTA Position Statement on  
Supporting the Provision of Free Menstrual Hygiene Products  
in all Delaware Public and Charter Schools**

National PTA believes that all children and youth should be able to attend school in a safe and inclusive environment free from discrimination. There are explicit federal statutory protections which currently address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability.<sup>1</sup> National PTA also recognizes that a healthy child is a teachable child, and sickness, hunger, vision impairment, physical and sexual abuse, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use, social and emotional problems, unhealthy dietary habits, and a lack of physical activity may inhibit student's ability to learn.<sup>2</sup> School is often best positioned to serve as the community's center for meeting the needs of the whole child, even though the well-being of children is primarily the responsibility of the home.<sup>3</sup> Students and educators have a right to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning and achievement.<sup>4</sup>

We know that 1 in 5 young people who menstruate in the United States have either left school early or missed school entirely because they did not have access to period products.<sup>5 6</sup> We also know that those who menstruate and have low-incomes and experience food insecurity are more likely to struggle to purchase basic menstrual hygiene products with 21% unable to afford menstrual hygiene products on a monthly basis.<sup>7</sup> Across the U.S., those who menstruate struggle to acquire the hygiene products they need and the problem is particularly acute for those who live in underserved communities.<sup>8 9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National PTA Resolution: Recognition of LGBTQ Individuals as a Protected Class

<sup>2</sup> National PTA Resolution on School Health Councils

<sup>3</sup> National PTA Resolution on School Health Councils, National PTA Position Statement on Elements of Comprehensive Health Programs

<sup>4</sup> National PTA Position Statement - Safe and Supportive Schools

<sup>5</sup> *Always®* Joins Forces with Gina Rodriguez & Feeding America® to Help #EndPeriodPoverty and Keep Girls in School. November 13, 2019. P&G News.

<sup>6</sup> Rapp, A. & Kilpatrick, S. (February 4, 2020). *Changing the Cycle: Period Poverty as a Public Health Crisis*. University of Michigan, School of Public Health. <https://sph.umich.edu/pursuit/2020posts/period-poverty.html>

<sup>7</sup> Carroll, L. (January 10, 2019). Even in the U.S., poor women often can't afford tampons, pads. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-menstruation-usa/even-in-the-u-s-poor-women-often-cant-afford-tampons-pads-idUSKCN1P42TX>

<sup>8</sup> Duquesne University School of Nursing. *The Ultimate Guide to Feminine Hygiene*. <https://onlinenursing.duq.edu/master-science-nursing/the-ultimate-guide-to-feminine-hygiene/>

<sup>9</sup> Goldberg, E. (April 5, 2020). Periods Don't Stop for Pandemics, So She Brings Pads to Women in Need. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/05/us/02IHW-virus-tampons-pads-periods-product-shortages.html>

Approximately 38% of children in Delaware are considered low income.<sup>10</sup> According to the Delaware Department of Education's September 30, 2019 enrollment count, there are 37,385 students in grades 6-12 in public and charter schools who can have a menstrual cycle.<sup>11</sup> The median age at menarche is 11 years and 9 months however this is a median average and menarche can occur in children as young as 8 years old.<sup>12</sup> We therefore ask that menstrual hygiene products be easily accessible and within easily accessible locations for students younger than age 12 in cases of early menarche. It is important to note that while less than 10% of those who menstruate in the U.S. do so before they are 11, there is a racial component with persons of color menstruating earlier than their White peers.<sup>13</sup> Age at menarche for non-Hispanic Blacks was significantly earlier than that of Whites at 10%, 25%, and 50% of those who had attained menarche, whereas Mexican Americans were only significantly earlier than Whites at 25%.<sup>14</sup>

In a study in those who menstruate from ages 18-54 years old, 86% reported that their period started unexpectedly in public without the supplies they need. Of that 86%, 48% obtained supplies for a dispenser in a public restroom.<sup>15</sup> Due to the fact that menstruation affects many age groups, we believe it is of critical importance that free access to menstrual hygiene products be made easily accessible to all students who may need access to these products. In addition, both nonbinary individuals and some trans males have the same pressing need to access these products and should be able access menstrual products while at school.<sup>16</sup>

We are aware that several states, including California, Illinois, New York, and most recently, New Hampshire, have passed similar legislation requiring schools to make menstrual hygiene products available at no cost to students.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census. (December 6, 2018). *American Community Survey 2013-2017, 5-year Data Release*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2018/acs-5year.html>

<sup>11</sup> Delaware Department of Education and State Board of Education. *September 30th Student Enrollment and Unit Allotment Report November 2019*. <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=2782&dataid=24082&FileName=Final%20Signed%2009302019%20Book.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Martinez, G.M. (September 10, 2020). Trends and Patterns in Menarche in the United States: 1995 through 2013–2017. *National Health Statistics Reports, Number 146*. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr146-508.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Chumlea, W.C., Schubert, C.M., Roche, A.F., Kulin, H.E., Lee, P.A., Himes, J.H., Sun, & S.S. (2003). Age at menarche and racial comparisons in US girls. *Comparative Study Pediatrics, 111*(1):110-3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12509562/>

<sup>14</sup> Chumlea, W.C., Schubert, C.M., Roche, A.F., Kulin, H.E., Lee, P.A., Himes, J.H., Sun, & S.S. (2003). Age at menarche and racial comparisons in US girls. *Comparative Study Pediatrics, 111*(1):110-3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12509562/>

<sup>15</sup> Harris Interactive on behalf of Free The Tampon Foundation. (August 14-16, 2013). [https://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/ftt\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/ftt_infographic.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Valentine, B. (2019, November 12). Menstruation products belong in all bathrooms: Transgender men and nonbinary individuals deserve access to menstrual products on campus. *The Temple News*. <https://temple-news.com/menstruation-products-belong-in-all-bathrooms/>

<sup>17</sup> Iyer, K. (February 19, 2021). New Zealand schools will offer free menstrual products. Where is the US on period equity? Far behind, experts say. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/02/19/united-states-period-poverty-free-products-tampon-tax-new-zealand/6797036002/>

Delaware PTA believes that improved access and removing the barriers of cost and location and increasing free access of menstrual hygiene products in schools will contribute to enhanced overall well-being, a more conducive learning environment and increased time available for educational activities.

Therefore, Delaware PTA supports:

- improving access to safe, sanitary products will help students go about their daily lives with dignity, and without shame or worry
- the provision and access of free menstrual hygiene products in Delaware's school bathrooms used by students who can have a menstrual cycle
- publishing on the school's website and posting in the school's common areas the locations of the bathrooms where menstrual hygiene products are provided

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