

To: Members of the Senate Education Finance and Senate Education Policy Committees

From: Diane Kohen, Physical Education Teacher, Health Teacher, Adapted Physical Education Teacher, Coach - St. Louis Park Middle School

It is time. I am in my 39th year of teaching Health, Physical Education, Adapted Physical Education as well as coaching multiple sports. During this time I have seen the struggles of our families increase. At St. Louis Park Middle School, many of our female students have their period or get it for the first time. The situations we deal with are extremely diverse from communicating with family members, sometimes through an interpreter, teaching the physiological changes that are taking place through puberty, and reinforcing that there is no shame in what is happening to their body. To acknowledge that body changes are happening and provide a safe place to get menstrual products and assist individuals to embrace their body and learn how to live with their period is crucial to their self esteem and emotional well being. I am a strong supporter of the bill because I witness every day how my students may have to choose between food on the table or other items like menstrual products. Schools provide free and reduced breakfasts and lunches to those who qualify. It is past time to provide menstrual products to those in need so they can feel good about themselves and not worry what will happen to their clothes without the appropriate supplies. They can embrace who they are and come to school ready to learn without fear of being made fun of. Through NCJW we have received supplies to provide to the girls; free pads and/or tampons and it is very impactful to the girls to know they have a place to go to privately take care of their business. I see how thankful they are and how this allows them to stay in school and learn how to best deal with their changing bodies.

Addressing period poverty is long overdue and is essential to ensuring educational equity for our diverse populations, and for that matter, all our female students.