

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

From: Kathleen Mahli, E-STEM Middle School (Saint Paul Public Schools)

Chair Cwodzinski, Chair Kunesh, and Members of the Committees, my name is Kathleen Mahli and I am a licensed school nurse at E-STEM Middle School in St. Paul. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to briefly speak with you today about an important health issue that impacts half of our student population. This statement is in support of SF50 which would provide access to menstrual products in Minnesota school bathrooms.

As a middle school nurse, I assist several students daily that are unexpectedly in need of menstrual supplies. As you can imagine, this is a humiliating experience for my sixth to eighth grade students. In my office, I seek donations and also purchase menstrual supplies to attempt to supply the 300+ female students for when they are in need. The donations and my personal funds are limited and the sustainability is uncertain. Because of financial barriers, some students are unable to attend school due to lack of menstrual supplies. This is a very unfortunate and inequitable situation that leads to poor academic outcomes.

On the bright side, the menstrual inequity issue can be easily fixed. By providing free menstrual supplies in school restrooms across the state, humiliating situations will be avoided and absenteeism will be decreased. Menstrual supplies are a basic hygienic necessity and should be as readily available to students as toilet paper. It's time to move forward with an equitable plan for all students.