

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

----- X

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Start: 10:17 A.M.

Recess: 12:21 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: HON. TIFFANY L. CABÁN, CHAIR

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

JAMES F. GENNARO  
JENNIFER GUTIÉRREZ  
KRISTIN RICHARDSON JORDAN  
KEVIN C. RILEY  
ALTHEA V. STEVENS

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

AMANDA FARIÁS  
CARMEN DE LA ROSA

## COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Melanie Weniger,  
Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programs  
at the New York City Commission of Gender Equity

Roman Gorman,  
Citywide Chief Procurement Officer from The  
Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Kat Thompson,  
Chief of Staff at Department of Correction

Chelsea Chard,  
Senior Policy Advisor from the Department of  
Correction

Despina Zaharakis,  
Senior Executive Director of the Office of  
School Wellness Programs from New York City  
Public Schools

John Shea,  
Chief Executive Officer of the Department of  
School Facilities from New York City Public  
Schools

Gabriela Lopez,  
Representing Youth Advisory Council at the  
Organization of Period

Marni Sommer,  
Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at The  
Mailmen School of Public Health Columbia  
University

Jennifer Weiss-Wolf,  
Representing NYU Law

Suzanne Herman,  
Legal Director at Period Law

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Laura Stausfeld  
Executive Director of Period Law

Tiffany Jade Monroe,  
Trans Justice Coordinator for Caribbean Equality  
Project

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

4

SERGEANT LYNCH: This is a microphone test for the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. Recorded in the chambers by Layla Lynch on September 18, 2023.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. At this time, would everyone please find their seats. We are ready to begin.

At this time, we ask if you could please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. While the hearing is in session, we ask that nobody approach the dais at any time. Thank you for your cooperation.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

[GAVELING IN] [GAVEL SOUND]

Hello, and welcome everyone. My name is Tiffany Cabán, my pronouns are she/her, and I am the Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. Today we are here for hearing entitled, *Oversight - Menstrual Equity in NYC - Update*.

In 2016 this council became the first U.S. city to pass comprehensive legislation to increase access to menstrual products. However, advocates had highlighted flaws in the implantation of the 2016

2 laws. And, today, we are here to revisit these laws  
3 and highlight the potential shortcomings and  
4 implementation to ensure we address them adequately  
5 to meet the needs of people who menstruate in this  
6 city.

7 Additionally, we will hear five pieces of  
8 legislation:

9 Introduction 1055-2023, sponsored by Chair Cabán,  
10 is a Local Law to amend the administrative code of  
11 the city of New York, in relation to menstrual  
12 products, which, as I mentioned, I am proud sponsor.

13 Introduction 1056-2023, which is a Local Law to  
14 amend the administrative code of the city of New  
15 York, in relation to the provision of feminine  
16 hygiene products in schools, sponsored by Council  
17 Member De La Rosa.

18 And three pieces of legislation sponsored by  
19 Council Member Farías:

20 Introduction 1057-2023, a Local Law to amend the  
21 administrative code of the city of New York, in  
22 relation to requiring The Department of Correction to  
23 report on its distribution of feminine hygiene  
24 products to female incarcerated individuals and  
25

2 female individuals arrested and detained in the  
3 custody of the department for at least 48 hours.

4 Introduction 1058-2023, a Local Law to amend the  
5 Administrative Code of the city of New York, in  
6 relation to education on feminine hygiene products.

7 Introduction 1059-2023, a Local Law to amend the  
8 Administrative Code of the city of New York, in  
9 relation to including menstrual cups in the  
10 definition of feminine hygiene products and the  
11 provision of such products.

12 An estimated 26 percent of the total population  
13 is of reproductive age. Most people of reproductive  
14 age will menstruate each month for between two and  
15 seven days. Unfortunately, the stigma associated  
16 with menstruation continues to exist and is amplified  
17 by various sociocultural factors. To combat these  
18 challenges, it is essential that people who  
19 menstruate have access to menstrual products.

20 The average person who menstruates spends \$9.00  
21 per month -- I will say I spend more than that, for  
22 sure -- on period products. And in order to have a  
23 fully equitable and participatory society, we must  
24 have laws and policies that ensure menstrual products

2 are safe and affordable and available for those who  
3 need them.

4 According to a survey of 1,010 U.S. teens who  
5 menstruate between ages 13 to 19 commissioned by  
6 Thinx and PERIOD, "period poverty," or the inability  
7 to access menstrual hygiene, has jumped to nearly a  
8 quarter of all U.S. students, an increase from one in  
9 5 in 2019. We will look at the legislation that has  
10 already into consideration some of these concerns,  
11 and we hope to hear from The Administration and  
12 members of the public about the utility of these  
13 updates to the law.

14 And before closing, I would like to note for the  
15 record that in both my capacity as the chair of this  
16 committee, and co-chair of the LGBTQIA+ Caucus, that  
17 the 2016 legislation, path breaking as it was,  
18 contained language that we would seek to edit were we  
19 considering the legislation today. In 2023, this  
20 committee is determined to use gender expansive  
21 language that acknowledges that not every women or  
22 girl menstruates, and that everyone who menstruates  
23 is a woman or girl. Throughout this hearing, let us  
24 keep trans, non-binary, intersex, and other gender  
25 expansive New Yorkers in our minds and hearts.

2 And, in closing, I would like to thank my own  
3 staff, my Chief of Staff, Celia Castellan; Jesse  
4 Myerson - Director of Communications; Madhuri Shukla  
5 - Legislative and Budget Director; as well as our  
6 committee staff, new Committee Counsel, Sahar  
7 Moazami, welcome, congratulations, and Cristy Dwyer,  
8 Senior Legislative Policy Analyst for their work on  
9 this hearing.

10 I am going to acknowledge the council members who  
11 are present: Council Member Gutiérrez, Council Member  
12 Farías, Council Member De La Rosa, and I am going to  
13 invite my colleagues to give opening remarks.

14 Council Member De La Rosa?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: [INAUDIBLE]

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: You good? Okay, Council  
17 Member Farías?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair. Good  
19 morning everyone, I am Council Member Amanda Farías,  
20 and I am proud to be attending today's hearing to  
21 discuss five of the ten bills in The Women's Caucus  
22 Menstrual Equity bill package.

23 This bill package led by myself, Women's Caucus  
24 Co-Chair Lewis, and Chair Cabán, and several members  
25 of the Women's Caucus serve as an important



2 recommitment to menstrual equity in a time when a  
3 states across the nation tried to ban even saying the  
4 word "period". The majority of this body, and likely  
5 this room as I am looking around, has personally  
6 experienced how inaccessible period products are  
7 throughout our city. This is an issue of public  
8 health and equity that continually needs to be  
9 addressed and adapted. Women know talking about  
10 menstruation as young person is limited. And the  
11 only time we are really talking about access to it is  
12 when we are asking someone in a restroom, workplace,  
13 or school if they have one to share. We in The  
14 Council are working diligently to present a package  
15 of bills to continue remedying that historical  
16 neglect. Menstrual equity is centered on removing  
17 barriers to access and removing the long and grave  
18 stigma surrounding our periods, who uses them, and  
19 how available they are to us.

20 Thank you to my colleague, Chair Cabán, for you  
21 leadership in holding today's hearing, and to the  
22 dedicated sponsors of this package, Speaker Adrienne  
23 Adams, Council Member De La Rosa, Council Member  
24 Brooks-Powers, Council Member Stevens, Council Member

2 Menin, Council Member Hudson, and Council Member  
3 Abreu, and Public Advocate Williams.

4 Finally, thank you to the super majority of my  
5 colleagues, the 35+ sponsors of these bipartisan  
6 bills for reinstating our city's commitment to public  
7 health, basic peoples' needs, and to hopefully soon  
8 put an end to the stigma women, young girls, men, and  
9 gender non-binary folks experience every month along  
10 their period. As the prime sponsor on Introductions  
11 1057, requiring the Department of Correction to  
12 report on its distribution of feminine hygiene  
13 products; 1058 requiring The Department of Health and  
14 Mental Hygiene to create written materials containing  
15 information on menstrual products including a  
16 description of each, information on how to use each  
17 product, any health risks associated with the each  
18 product; and 1059 which would expand the definition  
19 of menstrual products to include menstrual cups a  
20 Local Law.

21 And as the co-prime sponsor of Introduction 1055  
22 and 1056, I look forward to working with all of my  
23 colleagues and agency partners to make these critical  
24 pieces of legislation a reality, thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, and I would like to  
3 acknowledge that Council Member Riley has joined us.

4 And I will turn it over to the committee counsel  
5 to administer the oath.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. Just as a  
7 reminder, for those wishing to testify in person,  
8 please see the Sergeant At Arms in the back of the  
9 hearing room to fill out a testimony card.

10 For those testifying via Zoom, your name will be  
11 called and you will be prompted to unmute.

12 All those who wish to submit testimony you may do  
13 so at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

14 We will now hear testimony from members of the  
15 Administration.

16 Will you please raise your right hand? Do you  
17 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
18 nothing but the truth, before this committee, and to  
19 respond honestly to council member questions?

20 [ADMINISTRATION AFFIRMS]

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin when  
22 ready.

23 MELANIE WENIGER: Good morning Chair Cabán and  
24 members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.  
25 My name is Melanie Weniger, and I am the Deputy

2 Executive Director for Policy and Programs at the New  
3 York City Commission on Gender Equity or CGE. CGE  
4 works to advance gender equitable policies,  
5 practices, and programming within New York City  
6 government and across the city at-large. In this  
7 role, I lead the team that monitors policy and  
8 legislation, develops and implements programming, and  
9 conducts research related to our three areas of  
10 focus: Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and  
11 Reproductive Justice, and Safety. In particular, our  
12 office focuses on the needs of, and inequities faced  
13 by, women, girls, transgender, intersex, and gender  
14 expansive New Yorkers, using an intersectional lens  
15 and a human rights framework.

16 CGE sits within the Mayor's Office of Equity  
17 (MOE), the City's first centralized equity office,  
18 which the Adams Administration launched last year.  
19 MOE works to foster a fairer, more equitable city  
20 through policies, practices, and programs across the  
21 City's agencies and systems.

22 I am joined today by Roman Gofman, Citywide Chief  
23 Procurement Officer from the Department of Citywide  
24 Administrative Services (DCAS), Kat Thompson, Chief  
25 of Staff and Chelsea Chard, Senior Policy Advisor,

2 both from the Department of Correction (DOC), and  
3 Despina Zaharakis, Senior Executive Director of the  
4 Office of School Wellness Programs and John Shea,  
5 Chief Executive Officer of the Department of School  
6 Facilities, both from New York City Public Schools  
7 (NYCPS), to answer your questions.

8 The Adams Administration is committed to gender  
9 equity and meeting the health needs of women, girls,  
10 and gender-expansive people. Earlier this year, the  
11 Mayor announced his plan to develop New York City's  
12 first-ever Women's Agenda and hosted a Women's Health  
13 Summit at Hunter College to focus on dismantling  
14 decades of systemic inequities that lead to racial  
15 disparities in health outcomes. The Administration  
16 has also worked to protect access to reproductive  
17 healthcare, abortion, and gender-affirming care in  
18 New York City through Executive Orders and  
19 initiatives like the Abortion Access Hub.

20 Menstrual equity laws and policies are geared  
21 towards ensuring that menstrual products are safe,  
22 affordable, and available to those who need them.  
23 Menstrual inequity disproportionately affects  
24 marginalized girls, women, and trans and gender  
25 expansive people who experience poverty, housing

2 insecurity, are justice involved or in the child  
3 welfare system. New York City led the charge toward  
4 menstrual equity in 2016 by codifying Local Laws 82,  
5 83 and 84 to ensure products are available at no cost  
6 to students in grades six through 12 in public and  
7 charter schools, people served by homeless shelters,  
8 and people who are incarcerated.

9 Many other cities and states, including New York,  
10 have since passed or proposed dozens of laws that aim  
11 to provide menstrual products in certain locations or  
12 to certain populations, and to repeal taxes on period  
13 products. New York City's menstrual equity laws have  
14 allowed more menstruating people to access products  
15 and manage their cycle in a dignified and comfortable  
16 way.

17 In the school setting, menstrual products,  
18 specifically pads and tampons, are available for free  
19 in dispensers in girl's and single-occupancy  
20 restrooms in all public and charter school buildings  
21 with grades six and up. Custodial staff are  
22 responsible for monitoring the restrooms and  
23 restocking products as needed. NYCPS recently  
24 announced that this program has been expanded to  
25 school buildings with grades four and five in

2 recognition of the fact that some younger students  
3 also menstruate, and dispensers for pads were  
4 installed in single-occupancy bathrooms in these  
5 schools in advance of the new school year.

6 Menstrual products are also provided in shelters,  
7 including domestic violence shelters, single adult  
8 shelters, family shelters, and HIV/AIDS services  
9 housing. Clients have multiple opportunities and  
10 areas where they can access menstrual products. Based  
11 upon the shelter operations, products are left in  
12 easily accessible locations such as the front desk or  
13 shared pantries. Certain shelters distribute  
14 additional products during outreach events. Case  
15 managers in all shelters are available to clients for  
16 questions about the resources available to them,  
17 including menstrual products, and clients receive  
18 packets with this information during intake.

19 Menstrual products, both pads and tampons, are  
20 also available at the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers  
21 Island to people in City custody. Products are either  
22 freely available or available by request, depending  
23 on the housing area. Menstrual products are also  
24 available to people in DOC facilities within  
25

1 courthouses, both post-arraignment and for those who  
2 have a court appearance.  
3

4 Individual agencies purchase menstrual products  
5 for their respective clients, though some agencies  
6 receive donations of menstrual products that they  
7 then distribute to clients. DCAS maintains a supply  
8 of pads in its warehouse that agencies can request  
9 and access if needed.

10 CGE leads the Menstrual Equity Workgroup as part  
11 of our Health and Reproductive Justice portfolio. The  
12 Workgroup has been active since late 2021 to support  
13 the implementation of the Local Laws and to address  
14 any existing or future gaps in implementation.

15 Workgroup members include DCAS, NYCPS, DOC,  
16 Department of Homeless Services, Department of Social  
17 Services/Human Resources Administration, Department  
18 of Health and Mental Hygiene and other agencies with  
19 a role to play in achieving menstrual equity. We use  
20 an expansive definition of gender and recognize that  
21 not all women menstruate and that trans men and  
22 gender expansive people may also experience periods.  
23 Together, the Workgroup has conducted research and  
24 worked across agency partners to better understand  
25



2 menstrual product procurement and distribution  
3 policies and practices.

4 The Workgroup is also collaborating to develop  
5 policy interventions to better understand client  
6 needs and preferences and improve implementation  
7 where necessary. For example, we are working with  
8 NYCPS to explore different avenues to get student  
9 feedback on menstrual products and access. We are  
10 also working with NYCPS to develop materials for  
11 students about menstruation and their rights to  
12 access products, which could potentially be leveraged  
13 by other agencies. We are also collaborating with  
14 agencies to explore opportunities to increase the  
15 variety of products offered to clients in certain  
16 settings. In addition, we are partnering with the  
17 Office of Labor Relations on programming related to  
18 menstruation and menopause for City workers. We will  
19 continue to work together to develop policy and  
20 programming around menstrual equity for New Yorkers.

21 The Administration appreciates the intent of the  
22 legislative package and looks forward to discussing  
23 these bills further with Council. We have a few  
24 comments on the bills within the package:

25 Introduction 1055-2023:

2 This bill would require NYCPS to produce an  
3 annual report on the provision of menstrual products  
4 to students. It would also require that the City use  
5 the term "menstrual products" in all laws, documents,  
6 and materials, rather than "feminine hygiene  
7 products." The Administration supports the use of the  
8 gender-neutral term "menstrual products." The  
9 Administration also recognizes the importance of  
10 increasing product access to students and is happy to  
11 discuss our shared goals further with Council.

12 Introduction 1056-2023:

13 This bill would expand the schools in which NYCPS  
14 is required to provide menstrual products to grades  
15 four to 12. The Administration has already taken  
16 steps to expand product access to schools with grades  
17 four and five, as dispensers for pads have been  
18 installed in single-occupancy restrooms in NYCPS  
19 schools.

20 Introduction 1057-2023:

21 This bill would require DOC to produce an annual  
22 report on the provision of menstrual products to  
23 incarcerated individuals. The Administration has  
24 concerns about requirements to track and report the  
25 use of menstrual products on an individualized basis.

2 We would like to talk with Council further about the  
3 goals of this legislation and options to meet that  
4 intent.

5 Introduction 1058-2023:

6 This bill would require DOHMH to create written  
7 materials with information regarding menstrual  
8 products and provide the written materials to NYCPS  
9 for dissemination to students in grades six to 12.  
10 The Office of School Wellness Programs already  
11 disseminates a brochure called *Period Facts* to  
12 schools. This information is circulated to principals  
13 and schools can request these brochures for their  
14 students. As mentioned earlier in the testimony, the  
15 Menstrual Equity Workgroup is working on developing  
16 more materials for students on these issues.

17 Introduction 1059-2023:

18 This bill would add menstrual cups to the  
19 definition of feminine hygiene products and require  
20 these products to be distributed. The Administration  
21 recognizes that menstrual cups can be a sustainable  
22 alternative to disposable tampons and pads but  
23 acknowledge that there may be health and safety  
24 concerns in distributing these products in a broad  
25

2 array of settings. We would like to discuss this bill  
3 further with Council.

4 The Adams Administration recognizes that access  
5 to period products, particularly for vulnerable New  
6 Yorkers, is a vital step toward gender equity. We  
7 look forward to working with the Council to improve  
8 conditions for menstruating New Yorkers so that they  
9 can move through the world with dignity.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this  
11 important subject today. We look forward to your  
12 questions and to continuing to work together to  
13 advance menstrual equity in New York City.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, so, to begin, I  
15 have a series of questions that I think I would love  
16 for each agency present to address. So, maybe we  
17 should go agency by agency, but there will be a  
18 little bit of repetition here. And starting just  
19 from the most general place, I know it was mentioned  
20 in the testimony, but I would like to hear what types  
21 of menstrual products are currently being provided?  
22 And what are the biggest challenges to the provision  
23 of those menstrual products in your respective  
24 agencies?

2 I guess we could start with one agency. I will go  
3 through all of the questions, and then we'll move  
4 onto the next.

5 ROMAN GORMAN: Thank you, Chair. I will start for  
6 Department of Citywide Administration Services.

7 So, under Local Law 83, we were only required to  
8 supply... store and supply sanitary napkins on  
9 behalf of the City. So, DCAS itself does not store  
10 these types of items for the agency's use, but it is  
11 available for other agencies' distribution.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, to be clear, if somebody  
13 calls up DCAS the only thing available to them would  
14 be pads not tampons?

15 ROMAN GORMAN: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, uhm, and have you all  
17 had an internal discussion about adding tampons and  
18 other products to be available?

19 ROMAN GORMAN: So, we have not started... We have  
20 internal discussions overall on the type of products  
21 available, uhm, if a requirement for DCAS to store  
22 and supply these products is made clear. We would  
23 procure as needed. Agencies to have the ability to  
24 buy these products themselves directly from the  
25 Preferred Source Program New York State. I believe

2 that is what is happening currently. But if DCAS is  
3 required to store it for distribution, we would be  
4 able to do that.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so if they request from  
6 DCAS, they get the, uhm, the pads for free or is  
7 it... Is that what you are saying? And, then, if  
8 they want tampons they have to purchase from a  
9 vendor?

10 ROMAN GORMAN: So, it isn't free from DCAS. So, w  
11 have a central storehouse catalogs for a variety of  
12 commodities including sanitary napkins. We purchase  
13 it on behalf of the City, and, then, if an agency  
14 requires us to distribute it to them, then reimburse  
15 us for the cost that we paid.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And this might end up being a  
17 question for other folks, but if I am looking at the  
18 approved vendors for the City, and I am looking at  
19 tampons and pads, right? And, then, I look to you  
20 guys, is the price that you guys have for the pads  
21 lower than what's available through the vendors?

22 ROMAN GORMAN: Uhm, it depends. Pricing is  
23 different across the City, because it is different  
24 specifications of the type of pads that agencies are  
25 requiring.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

3 ROMAN GORMAN: So, under our specifications that  
4 we precured in 2016, uh, the pad prices that we have  
5 are current, and we negotiate time and time. It  
6 depends on volume that we purchase on behalf of the  
7 City. But that could be different across the  
8 agencies based on their needs for their client base.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And I do know that the quality  
10 of items differs across agencies, so I am sure that  
11 we will touch on that today.

12 Could you also talk to me a little bit about  
13 distribution, and how your agency provides guidance  
14 to your staff? You know, whom, where, and when to  
15 provide access to these products? Does your agency  
16 monitor and/or enforce the proper distribution at  
17 each agency? Is there a way for the particular  
18 population served by your agency to relay issues with  
19 the distribution and quality, like, a systematized  
20 way to do that?

21 ROMAN GORMAN: So, DCAS does not have authority to  
22 oversee the distribution directly to the client base.  
23 We do it... to the agency specifically.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes.

2 ROMAN GORMAN: We do have an online catalog for a  
3 variety of commodities for regular City operations.  
4 We do have communication with the Purchasing  
5 Department of each agency to understand what's in our  
6 catalog and what the time frame is for turnaround for  
7 us to deliver. But, we do not oversee where it goes  
8 after they agencies purchase it for themselves.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And you touched on this a  
10 little bit, but, uhm, you said that you negotiate  
11 pricing based on different places. How is the  
12 decision made to purchase, in addition to price, the  
13 product that your agency distributes, such as just  
14 pads?

15 ROMAN GORMAN: So, DCAS is not the [INAUDIBLE]  
16 expert in this item, along with any other item, we  
17 really work with our either sponsoring agencies or  
18 partnering agencies to draft up specifications of  
19 that they would like to see for us to carry. So,  
20 this was done back in 2016. But, we could have  
21 further conversations if need be if we want to change  
22 specifications around what we're providing to City  
23 agencies or even to increase the catalog that we  
24 provide.



2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Well, can you elaborate on  
3 what considerations were made in determining the  
4 quality of the products that you all acquire?

5 ROMAN GORMAN: I personally cannot. Back in 2016,  
6 the department or agency that sent us the  
7 specifications, they would have made the  
8 determination. It would not have been inhouse in  
9 DCAS. I can follow up to see where it came from and  
10 who made the determination back then. But, as of  
11 now, I don't have that answer.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes, I would love to get the  
13 information on what kinds of conversations are being  
14 had about what things are being considered before  
15 deciding on what products to purchase.

16 I am assuming, then, you couldn't speak to the  
17 considerations that were made in determining the size  
18 of the products that are made available? Do you have  
19 multiple sizes and types available?

20 ROMAN GORMAN: I believe we do, but I could follow  
21 up and send everything that we have in our catalog.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. And can you also send a  
23 copy of the catalog to us?

24 ROMAN GORMAN: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And how do you ensure  
3 equitable distribution of these products? Or is it  
4 just first come first serve by agency?

5 So, we have a large amount and we stock based on  
6 a rolling period of what we are required to have, but  
7 we have always have stock available for agencies that  
8 need it. We ensure that we have enough stock based  
9 on previous distribution, that we have a fiscal  
10 year's worth of stock, and then at the end of the  
11 fiscal year we stock the items that are needed.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And what is a fiscal year's  
13 worth of stock look like?

14 ROMAN GORMAN: It varies by fiscal year, and also  
15 because the last three years, due to the pandemic,  
16 but, typically there is about... It is an average  
17 around 3,000 cases that are distributed per fiscal  
18 year. And, then, we ensure that we have that on-hand  
19 and always available.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And has your work at the  
21 agency been impacted by the pandemic?

22 ROMAN GORMAN: In terms of for this specific  
23 product?

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I mean, just in terms of need,  
25 distribution?

2 ROMAN GORMAN: So, during the pandemic the central  
3 store house was open and operating. We focused a  
4 little bit more on COVID personal protective  
5 equipment and things of that nature. I think there  
6 was an impact in certain products where, since  
7 agencies were not in the office, that they were not  
8 ordering as much whether it's this product or  
9 cleaning products and things of that nature. So, we  
10 did switch gears during COVID to focus more on PPE,  
11 but operations were 24 hours a day.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: How does the distribution of  
13 menstrual products to the various agencies currently  
14 work? Like, do you deliver it or do they have to  
15 pick up their allotment?

16 ROMAN GORMAN: We deliver.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

18 ROMAN GORMAN: So, we get a requisition in our  
19 system for the number of cases needed, the location  
20 that it is to be delivered, and I believe within 24  
21 hours we would have our trucks out there delivering  
22 to those specific agencies.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And, I mean, in addition to  
24 the agencies that are present here, what other  
25 agencies are participating in the distribution?

2 ROMAN GORMAN: So, for Fiscal Year 2023, we had  
3 not large distribution, but we had distributions to  
4 the District Attorney's Office of Kings County,  
5 Department of Transportation, Department of  
6 [INAUDIBLE] Services is one of our biggest clients,  
7 Administrative Children's Services, and they New York  
8 Police Department.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Now, another that question  
10 that I have, is that when you do those distributions  
11 do you know if those menstrual products are going to  
12 employees and clients? Assuming that it is an agency  
13 that has client base or just employees. Do you  
14 happen to know?

15 ROMAN GORMAN: For DCAS in The Office of Citywide  
16 Procurement, we don't focus on the program where it  
17 is going... [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah, okay.

19 ROMAN GORMAN: We deal mostly with the purchasing.  
20 We're the Facilities Department and we just get them  
21 the products that they requested.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Fair enough.

23 How do you account for feedback on the quality of  
24 products? I know that you said that there are  
25 conversations that happen, but I am still wondering

2 is it in a survey format? Are you collecting the  
3 data? Or...

4 ROMAN GORMAN: So, for Citywide Procurement  
5 overall, not just general to this product, we have an  
6 open line of communications with all agencies for  
7 anything we procure on their behalf. If there is any  
8 type of feedback that is required for us to take  
9 action on towards the vendor, they would come to us.  
10 If it is just general to understand if people are  
11 liking the product or things of that nature, that is  
12 not something in our purview.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, thank you.

14 I would love to be able to move over to DOC. I  
15 have a few questions, and I imagine that Council  
16 Member Fariás will also have questions, so I will  
17 pass it to her afterwards.

18 So, what type of products are currently being  
19 provided, and what are the biggest challenges to the  
20 provision of those products in our jail system?

21 KAT THOMPSON: Good morning, Kat Thompson, Chief  
22 of Staff with Department of Correction. Great  
23 question. So, what we are currently offering,  
24 readily available, and we have Always size 5 heavy  
25 pads, we have Always size 2 regular pads, we have

2 TAMPAX tampons, those are available in our housing  
3 areas, in A stations as well as at intake and in  
4 our court commands. There is also commissary. You  
5 can purchase... People in custody can purchase  
6 Playtex tampons, unscented regular 40-count, as  
7 well as TAMPAX tampons in regular 10-count, as well  
8 as Stayfree maxi pads in a 10-count through our  
9 commissary system.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so, in terms of... Now  
11 obviously they're available in the housing areas,  
12 what are some of the reasons why somebody might opt  
13 to buy those products through commissary?

14 KAT THOMPSON: We don't collect data necessarily  
15 on why people choose to purchase, but they are  
16 readily available in those housing areas, and in  
17 their buckets in the intake, and are very much  
18 available. So, the actual reason why someone would  
19 choose to purchase currently is not something that  
20 I have information on at this point.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And if.. If DOC is making  
22 menstrual products readily available for free on  
23 demand, uhm, what is the need to have them for  
24 purchase at commissary?

2 KAT THOMPSON: That's a good question. So, we do  
3 have tampons at commissary currently, they were  
4 temporarily not readily available, but they are now  
5 back in and available. So, I think that is part of  
6 why tampons have been ordered through commissary of  
7 late in the last three years. But, now all the  
8 tampons are back and available at Rosie's.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, when they're not  
10 available, when the City is not providing a free  
11 provision of tampons, then folks who are  
12 incarcerated have to purchase them?

13 KAT THOMPSON: That was available through  
14 commissary, correct. Now, they is security...

15 [CROSS-TALK]

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: No, but I just that... In  
17 terms of my question...

18 KAT THOMPSON: Yes...

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I just want to make sure that  
20 I am understanding that, is that correct?

21 KAT THOMPSON: So, say your question one more  
22 time?

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: If tampons are not, for  
24 whatever reason, at any given moment, readily  
25 available for free provision in a housing area, and

2 an incarcerated person needs them, they then have  
3 to buy them from commissary, correct?

4 KAT THOMPSON: If they are available through  
5 commissary, and the history of tampon availability  
6 has been subject to security, you know,  
7 availability. So, at the current time, tampons are  
8 available both readily available in the housing  
9 areas as well as through commissary.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: But, you did mention that  
11 there was a period of time... [CROSS-TALK]

12 KAT THOMPSON: Yes...

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: where they were not available  
14 for free. And the option was to purchase through  
15 commissary?

16 KAT THOMPSON: The option became available, I  
17 believe in 2022... [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

19 KAT THOMPSON: I have to come back to you with  
20 the exact date of which they were available through  
21 commissary, but not readily available through the  
22 housing areas. So, we are rectifying that now, and  
23 appreciate an opportunity to talk about it here.  
24 So, tampons are now available in the housing areas  
25 just as freely as they are with pads.



2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay... [CROSS-TALK]

3 KAT THOMPSON: And...

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And when did that... But,  
5 and you said in 2022 is when that became a reality?

6 [CROSS-TALK]

7 KAT THOMPSON: In 2022 they were... basically  
8 2021 and 2022, and 2023 the availability of tampons  
9 was no longer in the housing areas. But, starting  
10 in what looks like 2022, they are available by  
11 commissary. So, we will get back to you with the  
12 specific data as to when tampons were now being  
13 sold through commissary.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. Okay, and, so, how  
15 much do they cost in commissary?

16 KAT THOMPSON: In commissary? We have currently  
17 Playtex tampons, uh, \$15.60 for a 40-count, and  
18 TAMPAX tampons for a 10-count at \$3.90.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And how much do those same  
20 products cost at a local Dwayne Reed or Walgreens  
21 or whatever?

22 KAT THOMPSON: I don't have that in front of me  
23 here. But certainly we can look it up and get back  
24 to you on that one.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. What is the wage right  
3 now for work done while incarcerated?

4 KAT THOMPSON: The wage is ranging anywhere  
5 between I think around 55¢ to \$1.55. There are  
6 three wage structures currently. So, we can get the  
7 exact numbers. But it ranges from .55¢ an hour to  
8 \$1.55 or a \$1.45 an hour.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so if a person who  
10 menstruates needs to buy tampons, they would have  
11 to possibly work 15 hours to afford one box of  
12 tampons? And that is not including maybe getting  
13 the extra calories that they need through  
14 commissary, or other hygiene products, or anything  
15 else that they might need to acquire through  
16 commissary that they can't get through the jail? Is  
17 that all correct?

18 KAT THOMPSON: Now, remember, we do have pads  
19 available, and they have not been available. So,  
20 those are available. But, with change  
21 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I just want to know if that's  
23 all correct. If that's the right math... [CROSS-  
24 TALK]

2 KAT THOMPSON: [INAUDIBLE] you could do the math  
3 that way, certainly, yes. But, there still are  
4 pads available.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

6 So, I mean, I have to say that I think that the  
7 wage does not reflect the need to have sufficient  
8 funds to cover the cost of what are necessary  
9 products. And I think the choice in product is  
10 incredibly important for folks. And I... [CROSS-  
11 TALK]

12 KAT THOMPSON: I concur... [CROSS-TALK]

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And I think it's a problem.

14 KAT THOMPSON: So, just to address that, we are  
15 actually looking at the price that is charged  
16 currently, and I have asked personally that that  
17 been looked at and possibly brought down. If we  
18 can't bring it down to a better number, what we're  
19 gonna do is just simply provide them for free.  
20 They are now for free available. So, I agree with  
21 you, and that is something that we are certainly  
22 working on right now.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah, I mean, I think it is a  
24 matter of basic... I am sure Council Member Farías  
25 will have more to say about this. But, the fact

2 that we have them in some of our... We have them  
3 downstairs in our bathroom. We have both options  
4 in our schools. And the fact that incarcerated  
5 people are being denied that option or have to work  
6 15 hours to afford a box, uhm, is pretty upsetting.

7 Can you talk a little bit about some of the  
8 security concerns with tampons?

9 KAT THOMPSON: Sure, this is to the best of my  
10 understanding. So, the security concerns with  
11 tampons and their removal from free distribution,  
12 starting at around 2021, were related to issues of  
13 contraband, uhm, secretion as well as use of the  
14 string for, I think, lighting drugs potentially,  
15 and those are the security concerns. So, that is  
16 why the pads were kept as the main option -- Right?  
17 -- the only option really -- and the two different  
18 sizes of pads in our facilities... [CROSS-TALK]

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Now for secretion couldn't an  
20 option be to purchase tampons that don't have  
21 applicators, like, the paper or plastic  
22 applicators? Because, there are like OB tampons,  
23 for example, that don't have an applicator that  
24 could be used. Could possibly take care of that  
25 security concern... [CROSS-TALK]

2 KAT THOMPSON: Right, yes, I don't have... I  
3 wasn't involved at the time when those decisions were  
4 made, but that is certainly a good suggestion. So,  
5 and if you would like, we could take this offline and  
6 have further discussion on some of those  
7 technicalities.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: That would be great.

9 KAT THOMPSON: That's not a problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I have more questions, but I  
11 want to pass it over to Council Member Farías.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you so much, Chair.

13 I will just DOC for now, and then I will go to  
14 the other folks if that's okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Oh, yes, yes...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, I just wanted to  
17 make sure.

18 So, just really quickly, could you folks discuss  
19 the large concerns that we have here. I am hearing  
20 the contraband, the lighting, the secretion -- What  
21 are the concerns with tracking? And, then, are there  
22 any larger concerns around the access of offerings of  
23 menstrual cups?

24 KAT THOMPSON: So, from my perspective, concerns  
25 with tracking are that we are fully stocked, that

2 they are readily available to our people in custody  
3 when needed/as needed no matter where they are. So,  
4 they are definitely in intake now, in large buckets,  
5 ready to go. They're in every cell and intake. They  
6 are in our housing areas, fully stocked -- they  
7 should be. Our warehouse has about a quarter of  
8 million tampons on-hand, because we did have them  
9 previously... They have a five-year shelf life with  
10 them. Those are delivered and stored at the  
11 facilities as well -- at Rosie's. So, they're in our  
12 storehouse as well as in our facilities. We have no  
13 plans currently to make any procurement for tampons,  
14 because we have enough at the moment. Same thing  
15 with pads. They are readily available.

16 So, in terms of... And we do know what we spend  
17 every year. We are happy to share those numbers with  
18 you and Chelsea's got them.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Yes, that would be great,  
20 thank you.

21 CHELSEA CHARD: Yes, and I would just add that,  
22 as the Chief of Staff has said, women in the  
23 housing areas and in the intake areas, people in  
24 custody, whoever may need them, can freely access  
25 them. And in order to track specifically,

2 individually, how many we are giving out to any one  
3 person who may need them, we would have to actually  
4 restrict the access that is available in order to  
5 ,you know, count those products, track those  
6 products, and have people in custody ask for them  
7 specifically. So, as they are now, how we have  
8 operationalized it, we don't want to have to be  
9 tracking ,you know, how many menstrual products a  
10 person may be asking for and may be using at any  
11 one time. Because we don't want to discourage them  
12 perhaps from taking those products freely, incase,  
13 for whatever reason ,you know, they feel nervous  
14 about asking for them or they ,you know, I can  
15 understand why it may feel uncomfortable with the  
16 department or some other agency tracking how many  
17 products they are using.

18 So, as it stands, we distribute them freely in a  
19 manner that would actually make us have to restrict  
20 them in order to track them sort of on that  
21 individualized basis.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: And, then, in terms of  
23 like the massive purchase order that you have made  
24 and have a full stock of, how do we... You said a  
25 five-year shelf life? Is there expiration date?

2 How are folks monitoring that and tracking that per  
3 se?

4 KAT THOMPSON: Our Executive Director of Warehouse  
5 ,you know, took a look specifically in our prep for  
6 this, so he advised that we are within shelf life on  
7 everything we've got. And I am assuming it is on the  
8 packaging. I don't have that answer for you right  
9 now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay. But, I mean in  
11 terms of... I think, for me and for other folks, we  
12 are trying to figure out... I mean, hearing from  
13 DCAS earlier, of how they order, where we have stock,  
14 where don't, and ,you know, understanding where the  
15 money is going and how it is used. I went on the  
16 tour recently of Rosie's; I appreciated that when we  
17 walked through, folks could just go and grab what  
18 they needed when they needed it. Whether they needed  
19 it, whether they anticipated having to need it, or  
20 whatever it was, the accessibility was there.

21 But, on the other, like, governmental expense end  
22 of it, I guess I am interested in seeing how we are  
23 managing that and how the City itself might be over  
24 purchasing or not managing proper use of or getting  
25 use of the products that we have in stock. Hearing a



2 five-year shelf life, as a woman, is like, that's a  
3 lot of product to have. But, I understand the focus  
4 that folks have in terms of wanting to have it fully  
5 available.

6 And, then, in terms of concerns around access to  
7 providing an option for menstrual cups?

8 KAT THOMPSON: Okay, so, menstrual cups are not  
9 currently offered.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I know.

11 KAT THOMPSON: I think it would obviously require  
12 a discussion through our security, deputy  
13 commissioner, et cetera, [INAUDIBLE] to look at the  
14 security concerns. Now, the one issue that is a  
15 concern is just the sanitation of... We don't have  
16 access to boiling water to sanitize these things in  
17 our housing areas for obvious reasons. If you want  
18 me to elaborate I can. So, that would be a reason  
19 why they probably wouldn't work in our setting. But,  
20 I think we're open to having a discussion and  
21 thinking of ways in which we could look at this. So,  
22 it is something that we could consider, but, for now,  
23 the security and sanitation concerns are a reason why  
24 they are not available at this time.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, I would love to keep  
3 talking about that further, seeing if there are ways  
4 that we can use disposable cups and/or looking at the  
5 discharge or release planning process with DOC to see  
6 if the City can make it available then. I think when  
7 we are looking at a cost effective option, both  
8 internally within the agency and also when folks are  
9 leaving and reentering our communities, it could be a  
10 great option.

11 Okay, thank you so much. I am going to try to do  
12 this quickly for the other folks.

13 With DOHMH, for Introduction 1058, there with The  
14 Office of School Wellness, I wanted to know if this  
15 is policy to offer the brochures and *Period Facts* to  
16 schools or is this currently mandated?

17 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Hi, good morning.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Good morning.

19 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I am really happy to be here  
20 having this conversation.

21 The Office of School Wellness Programs is the  
22 program office for health education. So, health  
23 education is where students are taught the knowledge  
24 and the skills to be able to take care of their well-  
25 being. And part of that well-being being menstrual

2 equity. So, they are taught about puberty, they are  
3 taught, uh, starting in sixth grade and up, about the  
4 types of menstrual products available, their use,  
5 right? And, then, sort of having that knowledge, uh,  
6 also being able to have the conversation with a  
7 health professional or a family member, as to which  
8 of the products the students will use.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Sure.

10 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: In 2016, when we rolled out  
11 sort of menstrual products in schools in grades sixth  
12 through 12, our office worked with an organization  
13 called ETR to develop this Period brochure. It has a  
14 lot of information about puberty. It has information  
15 about product. We made it available to schools and  
16 it is still available. So, every year, we have a  
17 notice in our sort of weekly principal's digest --  
18 Right? -- that says, hey, ,you know, make sure that  
19 we are implementing our menstrual products for our  
20 students who menstruate in schools. And here is a  
21 way for you to order additional brochures for your  
22 students.

23 This was before my time. But, when I looked into  
24 it... we need to update things. When we first  
25 produced that, uh, we bought it from ETR, so it's not

2 an inhouse brochure. And it's only in English and  
3 Spanish, not in the DOE languages. So, the... Our  
4 members sit on the Menstrual Equity Workgroup. They  
5 sit on the Sex Ed Task force. They work with The  
6 Commission on Gender Equity. So, the task for  
7 creating updated materials focusing on menstrual  
8 equity will be developed at the Menstrual Equity  
9 Workgroup with members of all agencies and multiple  
10 DOE offices represented.

11 So, that is planned, and our health team is also  
12 thinking about how to boost lessons in fourth and  
13 fifth grade that talk mostly about developmental sort  
14 of growth to really also include menstrual product  
15 information.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sorry... So, in every DOE  
17 school this education is happening with The School of  
18 Wellness?

19 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Health Education is mandated  
20 by New York State. Every year in grades K through  
21 5...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Mm-hmm?

23 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: one semester or 54 hours --  
24 that can be one semester, it can be two periods...

25 [CROSS-TALK]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Or spread [INAUDIBLE]...

3 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: A week, right. For a year.

4 So, it is mandated for 54 hours at the middle school  
5 level and 54 hours at the high school level.

6 Our recommendation is that students get health  
7 education in sixth grade and eighth grade. And that  
8 is something that we really push for. Although,  
9 unfortunately, most students are getting it in 8th  
10 grade and 12th grade.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure.

12 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: So, that is something we are  
13 working on.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay. And, then, so, I  
15 appreciate that you are saying that you are looking  
16 to update the materials and it is clear that,  
17 regardless of this Workgroup functioning for however  
18 long it has been functioning, we have not updated it  
19 in the DOE languages. And now this is sparking to  
20 update it in the DOE languages. That's great. I'm  
21 looking forward to seeing all of those materials.

22 How frequently are principals asking for these  
23 period products or period factsheets for the schools?

24 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: So, the last notice or the  
25 notice for this year went out on August 29th...

1 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 46

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

3 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: announcing the expansion to  
4 grades 4 and five, and also reminding principals to  
5 ask for brochures... [CROSS-TALK]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

7 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: As of Friday of last week, I  
8 believe eleven schools have reached out and asked...  
9 [CROSS-TALK]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Eleven out of the entire  
11 city?

12 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Sorry?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Eleven out of the entire  
14 city?

15 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, so we're not doing a  
17 great job there. We have to be able to... So, I  
18 guess this goes back to my question, is this policy  
19 to create these facts sheets or is it mandated?

20 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: So... [CROSS-TALK]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: It has been mandated since  
22 2016?

23 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: No, it was not mandated. We  
24 wanted to support the educational piece... [CROSS-  
25 TALK]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, so, it's just  
3 policy...

4 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: of the rollout.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great. So, it's  
6 just internal policy to do this, because it is part  
7 of growing up and developing, and we want students...  
8 So, it sounds like a law to mandate it is probably  
9 extremely necessary, especially if we need to have  
10 access to the languages. If not ,you know, we can  
11 get a different administration or a different council  
12 means people can change priorities, and then this  
13 could wiped away overnight. Got it.

14 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I think it is something  
15 that... Sorry, we are committed to... [CROSS-TALK]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: For sure...

17 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: and ,you know, for... There's  
18 a re-energizing short of around making sure that our  
19 students have the information they need around  
20 menstruation for all students who menstruate. I  
21 think that expanding at the fourth and fifth grade  
22 charged it up a little bit. And I think the  
23 Menstrual Equity Workgroup is also really focused in  
24 on this. So, there is a re-energizing around this  
25 topic.

2 Also, I know that folks ask, well, how do  
3 students know? And we sort of had left that at the  
4 local school level. Right? Principals informing  
5 students, and the students can see the dispensers in  
6 the restrooms. We know that that is also an area  
7 that we need to sort of push a little bit. So, we  
8 are creating a flyer that will be available in all  
9 languages -- and principals will be able to print and  
10 post them -- that will inform students that there are  
11 free products and where they are available.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Yeah, I mean, that was  
13 actually going to be my final question. Every single  
14 time I visit a school in my district, I ask to go  
15 into one of the bathrooms, particularly the ,you  
16 know, girls bathrooms. And there are always empty  
17 pad and tampon dispensers. I read in testimony that  
18 the custodians are supposed to be in charge of  
19 restocking. But if the custodians are not doing it,  
20 and the students don't know where to go or are still  
21 going to the nurses office to request that -- and  
22 clearly then nurses in our schools are not flagging,  
23 "Students are still coming to me, maybe the bathroom  
24 is empty." But, when I mean I have gone into every  
25 bathroom in the school that I visited, and there is



2 not a single menstrual product available. I mean, my  
3 question lies with ,you know, how are we actually  
4 enforcing it and ensuring that principals understand  
5 that free accessible products are indeed mandated by  
6 law for our students? And it needs to be followed.

7 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I'm sorry that that has been  
8 your experience. And I'm sorry the students in that  
9 school have to deal with that. Right? I'll let John  
10 talk in terms of the distribution piece. But, you  
11 know, in my mind.. I was a principal, and I had my  
12 school aides, and they were responsible for making  
13 sure that conditions were up to speed in the school.  
14 Bathrooms were stocked; hallways were clean;  
15 classrooms were clean. Right? And they got my  
16 intel, and I met with the custodian weekly to make  
17 sure that we are on the same page and conditions were  
18 where they should be. And that's what we assumed was  
19 happening. But, obviously it's not. If my  
20 dispensers were empty, that is the first thing I  
21 would do, reach out to my custodian engineer, say,  
22 what's going on here? And if I wasn't satisfied at  
23 that level, we have Deputy Director of Facilities  
24 that principals can always reach out to when there is

2 an issue at the school level, and they will be able  
3 to resolve it.

4 That is sort of my school experience, my  
5 instructional piece... [CROSS-TALK]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure.

7 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: But, John can speak to the  
8 distribution.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Yes, and I do want to say  
10 that we know principals are doing all the things all  
11 do. So, I get that. But, I want to get in on how we  
12 are making sure that they're stocked.

13 JOHN SHEA: Sure, and thank you for the question,  
14 Council Member. Before I answer, I just wanted to  
15 express on behalf of Chancellor Banks, his strong  
16 support for the menstrual equity efforts of the  
17 Council. And we are happy to answer your questions  
18 here, so thank you for having us.

19 I will start by saying that if there are  
20 dispense... Custodian engineers have clear  
21 direction that they are supposed to maintain stocks  
22 of all of these products at all times in their  
23 bathrooms.

24 What you have described is unacceptable. If  
25 there is an issue with dispensers not being

2 stocked, as Despina said, there is an escalation  
3 process that starts with the school, but if that is  
4 not successful then people can always escalate that  
5 beyond the school, uh, to my office, and we will  
6 ensure... And we have in the past, not just for  
7 this, but for other facilities' related issues.  
8 Anyone on the Council can reach out to me and my  
9 office, and we will address those on a case by case  
10 basis. We need to know that information, and that  
11 is helpful to us if that is not happening. We  
12 appreciate that support.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: For sure, thank you so  
14 much, and thank you, Chair for the very generous  
15 amount of time.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I would like to pass it over  
17 to Council Member De La Rosa.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you, and I  
19 think Council Member Fariás did a great job asking  
20 some of the questions I had as well.

21 But, I did want to ask about those students who  
22 are yet in sixth grade, uhm, I understand that  
23 there's an education component, but if one of those  
24 students does have a need during the school day for  
25

2 menstrual hygiene product, what is the protocol  
3 right now at this moment?

4 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: So, if the student does not  
5 have Health Education in sixth grade, they are not  
6 getting the product instruction from their school.  
7 The products are available to the students, but  
8 questions about the product... And access to the  
9 product is free access. Right? Students can go to  
10 the dispenser and pick it up. But, information needs  
11 to come from family members, needs to come from  
12 questions to the nurse maybe, questions to a health  
13 professional. That is why we think it is key for  
14 students in sixth grade to have Health Education.

15 Unfortunately, that is a state requirement. It  
16 is anytime sixth through eight. But, in all of the  
17 trainings we do for Health teachers, and all of our  
18 conversations with principals, it is sixth grade. We  
19 are really pushing sixth grade, eighth, and ninth  
20 grade.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: I hear you. What I am  
22 asking is if ,you know, someone is menstruating, and  
23 they need... they have an emergency, and they need  
24 access, and they are not in sixth grade, what is the  
25 protocol? Is then the instruction administered to

2 that child by a nurse, or is the child kind of left  
3 on their own to figure out how to use the product?

4 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I don't know what the protocol  
5 at the school level is, because that would be  
6 considered sort of a health emergency...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Mm-hmm

8 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Right? I don't if the  
9 protocol would be for the child to go to their  
10 homeroom teacher, the nurse, uh, call family, I don't  
11 know. There is no standard protocol that we have in  
12 place. But, that is something that we can definitely  
13 think about and take a look at and pose to schools.  
14 Right? Think about how we are guiding schools that  
15 are not providing health education to their students  
16 at sixth grade, but will have students who  
17 menstruate.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Absolutely, I think  
19 that that is important to have a plan and a protocol,  
20 because especially if the bill that I am sponsoring  
21 today passes, then ,you know, that age goes down to  
22 fourth grade. And, so, to have a child be put in a  
23 situation where they won't have anyone to instruct  
24 them or even have access to a product, it is

2 important. I think that a procedure and a protocol  
3 is needed.

4 And, then, the other question that I had was, how  
5 is accountability ensured? It seems to me from the  
6 line of questioning that both the chair and our  
7 colleague had, there isn't sort of honed in formula  
8 for who is accountable for kind of making sure that  
9 product is replaced and that it is constantly  
10 available.

11 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: That would... John...

12 JOHN SHEA: Sure, thank you for the question.  
13 And, again, if the custodian engineers have been  
14 given direction to maintain these stocks, and if  
15 there was an issue at the school that that was not  
16 being done, that would generally start with the  
17 principal having a conversation with the custodian  
18 engineer. And if that was not successful, then it  
19 should be escalated up. And we will take care of  
20 those issues. But we need to know that. So, again  
21 if you have... [CROSS-TALK]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Okay.

23 JOHN SHEA: schools in your district that you have  
24 issue specifics for, we would want to know that, and  
25 we... [CROSS-TALK]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: And are all bathrooms  
3 going to be serviced? If the law passes, are all  
4 bathrooms going to be serviced? I know I have  
5 visited schools where they have, like, a little kid  
6 bathroom and a bigger kid bathroom. As a mother of a  
7 very big nine year old, I know that there is  
8 flexibility with which bathrooms are used. But, will  
9 all bathrooms be serviced?

10 JOHN SHEA: So, currently all single occupancy  
11 restrooms and all girls restrooms in schools with  
12 children sixth through 12th have dispensaries for  
13 both pads and tampons. And in fourth and fifth  
14 grade, this summer, we are happy to report that we  
15 have rolled out pads in all of the single occupancy  
16 restrooms in school buildings with students fourth  
17 and fifth grade.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Oh, great, thank you  
19 so much for your questions, and I am looking forward  
20 to continuing the dialog.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, I just want to ask  
22 a couple of follow up questions on Council Member De  
23 La Rosa's questions, and then I am going to pass it  
24 to you, Jen.

2 In one of the answers to the council member's  
3 question was around ,you know, if a student is  
4 younger and starts to menstruate, where is that  
5 conversation happening, because they are not getting  
6 health education? One of the answers that was given  
7 is that it could [INAUDIBLE] conversation is had with  
8 the nurse, that there is some ,you know, a need and  
9 could talk to a nurse, correct?

10 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I am having a little acoustic  
11 issue, so I am just going to ask my...

12 JOHN SHEA: If there is an issue with a younger  
13 student.

14 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I... So, there are puberty  
15 lessons for grades four and five. And as I shared,  
16 uh, our health team is working to incorporate  
17 specific lessons menstruation... [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm

19 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: In grades four and five now  
20 that products obviously... [CROSS-TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

22 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: are available.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: But, you had mentioned that if  
24 a student has a need, and it is before they are  
25 getting that kind of education, uhm, some of the



2 places that they might get it is at home with their  
3 family or a school nurse, right?

4 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: That's my understanding,  
5 but... [CROSS-TALK]

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: All right. Okay.

7 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: each school is going to be  
8 different. I don't know if... [CROSS-TALK]

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: But...

10 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: it's going to be... If a  
11 child goes to a guidance counselor... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: [INAUDIBLE]

13 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: if a child goes to a teacher.

14 I mean, a child would go to a trusted adult...

15 [CROSS-TALK]

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah.

17 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: or a nurse.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah. I mean, it seems like a

19 nurse would a good option as a health professional.

20 How many of our schools have a nurse?

21 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I would need to... [CROSS-  
22 TALK]

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: A full-time nurse?

24 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: get back to you on that...

25 [CROSS-TALK]

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: But, it's not all of them?

3 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: My understanding is that  
4 certain... Schools with certain grades do, but I  
5 can't speak for ,you know... But, I... We can  
6 certainly get back to you on the number of schools  
7 that have a school nurse.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. I mean, I... I'm  
9 pretty sure it's not all of them. So, I think that  
10 is a problem in support and care.

11 And, then, this was mentioned... I mean, do you  
12 agree that we should have protocols for a student  
13 that experiences, like, beginning their... their,  
14 uhm, their period, like, unexpectedly that we should  
15 have protocols for that?

16 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I would need to talk to my  
17 team about that and see what can be put in place and  
18 how to appropriately guide principals -- talk to the  
19 Office of School Health. You know, really have a  
20 conversation. But, I can certainly start that  
21 conversation. And I think the Menstrual Equity  
22 Workgroup would also be very happy to undertake  
23 thinking through what that could look like at the  
24 school [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I... I just think that my  
3 point is, is that it was described as a health  
4 emergency. And this is not an emergency, it's  
5 something that happens to many of us on a cycle every  
6 month. Yeah, maybe we're off by a few days,  
7 whatever... whatever it might be, but this idea that  
8 we can't account for it seems a little bit absurd to  
9 me. I am going to be honest. And I do think that,  
10 like, from a health standpoint, schools have  
11 protocols for stomach aches, they have protocols for  
12 bloody noses, I don't understand why there isn't a  
13 set protocol for a person who starts their period.

14 So, it would make sense to me that would be  
15 something that the department should, uhm, should  
16 seriously consider doing or should do.

17 I am going to hand it over to my colleague,  
18 Council Member Gutiérrez.

19 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I sorry... Just if you...  
20 Chair, if I can, I was just informed that all schools  
21 have a nurse. So...

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: All schools have the... A  
23 full-time nurse or are supposed to have... [CROSS-  
24 TALK]

2 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: That's what I was informed...

3 [CROSS-TALK]

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: There's not a single nurse  
5 vacancy in not a single school in our city?

6 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I would not be able to respond  
7 to that. That's what I was told. I'm sharing with  
8 you what I was told. But, I will certainly follow  
9 up... [CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

11 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: As I said I would.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, thank you.

13 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Now... [CROSS-TALK]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair.

15 I have a couple of questions for DOE and them  
16 DOC.

17 So, I will start with DOE. Obviously I am just  
18 also wanting to double down on what all of my  
19 colleagues have said. I also visit with my schools.  
20 I also will time to time even do a little pop in with  
21 custodial staff, uh, where they will share with me  
22 their challenges that they have. And ,you know, I am  
23 going to start keeping count, but I can guarantee you  
24 that these dispensers are empty or either... broken.

25

2 And I think something that I would love to see  
3 you all work into the system is informing children of  
4 who they can notify when it's broken or when it's  
5 empty. That seems to be very unclear.

6 And you can certainly understand why it is  
7 uncomfortable for a young student to look for a  
8 custodian to be, like, hey, we're missing pads and  
9 tampons in the girls' bathroom. So, that was  
10 something that has never been clear to me. So, I  
11 wanted to double down on that.

12 Uh, on the education piece, is that something's  
13 that accessible to all students? Or is it students  
14 and families who opt in for ,you know, uh, like, for  
15 the use of products, but the education piece, is that  
16 for everybody?

17 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Health Education is mandated  
18 for all students. There is no opt out... [CROSS-  
19 TALK]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But, the piece about  
21 menstrual cycles, is that... is also included?

22 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: That is part of Health  
23 Education. There is no opt out.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Wonderful.

2 I was a staff member during the pandemic, and we  
3 got approached from many families who were concerned  
4 about, uh, the inability of other... of students to  
5 retain products... menstrual products while they  
6 were learning remotely. I know that it is still a  
7 challenge. Is there a system or a policy in place  
8 for students seeking to get products over the weekend  
9 or over holidays -- You know, essentially, in some  
10 kind of bulk fashion, where they are not trying to  
11 fenagle one product at a time? Is there something in  
12 place at every school where they can do that?

13 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I will let John speak to the  
14 access and the numbers. Right, students... Yep...  
15 John?

16 JOHN SHEA: Sure, thank you for the question. So,  
17 you mentioned during the pandemic. We did, even  
18 though schools were closed, we had a number of our  
19 school that were distribution sites for a variety of  
20 things, food in particular. But, we also distributed  
21 menstrual products from existing stock to the  
22 community. We do not currently have a process for  
23 providing products to people outside of school hours.  
24 But, we are happy to continue that conversation with  
25

2 the Council and the Workgroup to, uh, to see what's  
3 possible... [CROSS-TALK]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So, a student, right  
5 now, in a Friday, before a holiday weekend, can they  
6 go somewhere to pick up more than one product before  
7 they leave? I am referring to students.

8 JOHNE SHEA: Sure. So, my response to that would  
9 be that they are really provided in the existing  
10 bathrooms in the school. They would be able to take  
11 what they needed, uh, from those dispensers.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But, as we just shared  
13 with you, very, very seldom are these dispensers  
14 working and ,you know, again, this is not blanket,  
15 but, they're not... But, in that instance, where do  
16 they know where to go? Where do they go? Do they go  
17 to a nurses office? Do they go to their homeroom  
18 teacher? Is there a place where they can go in the  
19 event that they want to walk out with 10 products and  
20 they don't want to be seen by everybody. What is  
21 that system?

22 JOHN SHEA: Sure, and that's a great question.  
23 And, again, I would say that that's on a school by  
24 school basis where the school principal would manage

2 who that escalation should be within their individual  
3 building.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can I ask, this is  
5 from personal experience in my youth. I felt  
6 comfortable with a particular teacher. This  
7 particular teacher would give out menstrual products.  
8 Do teachers have a pathway to be reimbursed for the  
9 stuff that they provide to students at their own  
10 will, and their own discretion? But, do they have,  
11 uh, do they have that pathway?

12 JOHN SHEA: Yeah, I am not aware of one. But we  
13 can certainly get back to you with [INAUDIBLE]...  
14 [CROSS-TALK]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But, do you... I  
16 can't be the only one. I think there are many  
17 teachers who are doing this for their students --  
18 providing those for their students. Has this ever  
19 been a topic of discussion?

20 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I don't know about a topic of  
21 discussion, but to your point, I know our students...  
22 Our teachers do provide for our students. When they  
23 see a need and we are not meeting that need, they do  
24 provide. I think there are avenues for teachers  
25 getting reimbursed for the money that they put out,



2 but I would need to confirm whether a SIP, a small  
3 item purchase, can be for all... [CROSS-TALK]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [INAUDIBLE]...

5 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: All products or for some  
6 products. Right? So, I can follow up on that  
7 question. But, to your point about dispensers, I  
8 think now that we are developing ,you know, the  
9 poster to inform students that free products are  
10 available and where they are available, I think we  
11 need to double down, both on the custodian and [TIMER  
12 CHIMES] the principal end to ensure that products  
13 getting stocked is a priority for all schools.  
14 Because, I have heard it -- and I hear it -- and that  
15 is not the position we want to be in. We don't want  
16 to rollout a Menstrual Initiative, Menstrual Equity  
17 for thinking about our students who menstruate, and  
18 be told that there are no products.

19 So, we will double down on that with the  
20 publication of this flyer. And it will also be  
21 information for students, like, *here are free*  
22 *products for you*. Students can then say, "Well, I  
23 don't have them," right? So, it will be more  
24 informational, but also motivational.

2 I think that we are going to take that  
3 opportunity to really work together to make sure both  
4 principals and custodial engineers -- but, also  
5 everyone is supposed to be reading *P Digest*,  
6 including superintendents and their teams. Right?  
7 So, really making sure that we have that  
8 understanding across the system -- Free products are  
9 available. Period.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Wonderful, thank you.  
11 Uhm, thank you so much.

12 My last question is for DOC. In speaking with  
13 Council Member Fariás, I am in full support of her  
14 bill, and I know that you mentioned some challenges  
15 about potentially sterilizing menstrual cups.

16 Can you just describe for me, are there  
17 incarcerated individuals who do use.. Like, do  
18 they... Do they use menstrual cups? Or is it  
19 something that is band?

20 KAT THOMPSON: They're currently not available, so  
21 there should not be... There should not be...

22 [CROSS-TALK]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Oh, so, they're not  
24 even... They're not... They're not allowed to have  
25 them... [CROSS-TALK]

2 KAT THOMPSON: [INAUDIBLE] not allowed to have  
3 them... Yeah, that's correct.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: At all?

5 And, is the piece about sterilization just the  
6 boiling aspect of the cup? Which, to my  
7 understanding is not a 100 percent necessary. It is  
8 just strongly advised.

9 KAT THOMPSON: Right, that would be a concern.  
10 So, it is something that we... I think we need to  
11 take a look at. Right? And come to a conclusion.  
12 We don't have that in the moment. So, but at this  
13 time, there are no cups available.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And are there any other  
15 challenges that you are debating?

16 KAT THOMPSON: Right now, the conversation with  
17 this administration hasn't happened -- in terms of  
18 cups -- that I am aware of. So, I think it is yet to  
19 be discussed.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

21 KAT THOMPSON: And Chelsea may have some  
22 additional...

23 CHELSEA CHARD: I would just add that ,you know,  
24 sort of what was, uh, laid out in testimony is ,you  
25 know, there are certain settings that it is

2 challenging to maintain the menstrual cups in a  
3 hygienic way. And, so, there is not the boiling  
4 water available, and I think something we also have  
5 to consider for us, is that most of the bathroom  
6 facilities that we have for folks in custody are  
7 common areas, common bathroom use areas. So, that  
8 may also be another challenge just for hygiene  
9 purposes. And we ,you know, we of course want to  
10 make sure that if we are providing those products  
11 that people who need them can clean them  
12 appropriately so that they can stay safe and healthy  
13 while they are using those products. So, as the  
14 Chief of Staff said, it is not a full discussion we  
15 have had at this point, just because this is the first  
16 time that it is being brought to us. But, there  
17 certainly would be some barriers with kind of  
18 maintaining the hygiene off those products of...

19 [CROSS-TALK]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

21 CHELSEA CHARD: for the people who would want to  
22 use them.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I can understand that.

24 And with existing products that are made  
25 available to individuals like you mentioned, pads and

2 tampons? What are some of the steps that are taken  
3 to ensure hygiene in those instances?

4 KAT THOMPSON: Ensure hygiene? So, products are  
5 separately contained in bins in the A stations in  
6 those housing areas, they're packaged, and then  
7 they're handed out. So, that's how they... They are  
8 coming in boxes, they're unboxed, they're put into  
9 the bins in the intakes, et cetera. But, they are  
10 packaged, obviously, in their packaging when they are  
11 going out and distributed to our people in custody.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, how do they  
13 dispose of it... [CROSS-TALK]

14 KAT THOMPSON: For disposal? [CROSS-TALK]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: In a way that it is  
16 hygienic?

17 CHELSEA CHARD: We would have to get back to you  
18 on that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so I am just  
20 trying to... And they are different, they are  
21 different products a 100 percent. Uhm, but I am just  
22 trying to see if what you are raising about hygiene  
23 with the menstrual cups is starkly different that  
24 what is accessible with existing products. And if  
25 that is an area for improvement as well. But, I

2 think, uhm, however you all can continue to engage on  
3 that conversation is certainly helpful. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I want to move  
5 back to Department of Education again for a few  
6 questions.

7 Also, I just wanted to take a second to shoutout  
8 to the Brooklyn Girl Scout Troops, because, as some  
9 of you may know, between 2018 and 2020, Brooklyn Girl  
10 Scout Troops identified several issues at schools  
11 including four out of 23 not meeting the standards of  
12 providing both sanitary bins in each stall, and free  
13 menstrual products in the restrooms, and fourth and  
14 fifth graders who are not included in that Local Law  
15 84 of 2016.

16 But, I just want to say, like, how cool is that  
17 that young folks put together this study and  
18 collected the data, and identified a gap. But, it is  
19 also very clear that there still exist a gap. And,  
20 so, you know, we need work together to make sure that  
21 we are filling it.

22 Uhm, I wanted to go back to some of the testimony  
23 around the products being available in girls'  
24 bathrooms and single occupancy bathrooms. I know  
25 that my colleagues hit on just how critical it is

2 that students know where to find them. And certainly  
3 I think that it would be especially important for  
4 ,you know, gender expansive folks, trans students,  
5 for example, to know where to find these products,  
6 especially because they may be using certain  
7 bathrooms over others.

8 So, can you talk to me a little bit about how  
9 nonfemale identifying individuals who require these  
10 products are identified. And describe how a trans or  
11 nonbinary individual, for example, is supposed to  
12 access these products. And that is also a question  
13 that expands to DOC as well. So, I would love to  
14 hear you weigh in on that.

15 And, then, also, shelters, I haven't asked any  
16 questions around our shelters yet, but I would like  
17 to.

18 And how do you ensure equitably distribution of  
19 products to nonfemale identifying individuals?

20 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: So, I think I would need to  
21 talk with DSF to see what the rationale was in how  
22 they rolled this out in terms of deciding on girls'  
23 bathrooms and the single occupancy bathrooms.  
24 Theoretically, the thinking was that... Is that  
25 right? That's how they would...

2 JOHN SHEA: Sure. So, as I mentioned, the single  
3 occupancy restrooms are actually designated as gender  
4 neutral.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm?

6 JOHN SHEA: And those students that want to use  
7 those restrooms would have those products available  
8 in those spaced.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Well, my question to you, is  
10 if there is a, uh, a trans male student, who wants to  
11 use the boys bathroom, how does that trans male  
12 student, for example, know where to access period  
13 products and get them?

14 JOHN SHEA: That question, I apologize, I do not  
15 have an answer for. But, we can get back to you with  
16 what the policy is on that.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

18 I mean, I think that it, again, I just think some  
19 of the... And I just think some of the lack of  
20 answers speaks to sort of how gender expansive folks,  
21 trans folks, are not being centered in these  
22 policies. And, they should be, because it guarantees  
23 access to everybody.

24 I would move over to DOC to answer the same  
25 questions?



2 CHELSEA CHARD: Sure, and thank you, it is an  
3 important question. So, for DOC, uh, when  
4 transgender, gender nonbinary, or gender expansive  
5 folks, uh, intersex folks are coming into custody,  
6 they are... Our LGBTQ+ Affairs staff meet with them,  
7 and they do have an intake form. And on that intake  
8 form, one of the questions that can ask, or a box  
9 that the person in custody can check off is whether  
10 they do need menstrual products. And, so, for those  
11 individuals who may be housed in a male facility, we  
12 would potentially know who those individuals are, but  
13 if we don't, and they do end up needing them, they  
14 have several options. They can ask, if they are  
15 comfortable, the staff on the housing area. If  
16 they're not [comfortable] they can get a hold of our  
17 LGBTQ+ staff in many different ways discreetly or by  
18 asking for them, as well as [INAUDIBLE] staff and  
19 program staff. And they all that information readily  
20 available to them, in so much that if someone asks  
21 for those products, the LGBTQ+ staff keep those  
22 products in their office, in the male facilities, and  
23 so, they can distribute them if they are not  
24 available in the facility. There are many other  
25 folks that they can get ahold of within the facility,

2 again whether it is program staff or uniform staff to  
3 go and get those products and bring them to the  
4 person discreetly should they need them.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

6 And can anybody speak to what the case is in the  
7 shelter system?

8 MELANIE WENIGER: Sure, I am happy to speak to  
9 that. So, the city agencies that oversee shelters  
10 take very seriously their legal obligations to  
11 provide products and uphold the dignity of clients.  
12 And menstrual products are available in the shelter  
13 setting. As I mentioned in my testimony, they are  
14 available in different kinds of shelters. And the  
15 agencies -- DHS, DSS, HRA -- they work in partnership  
16 with DCAS and the Human Services providers that they  
17 work with to make sure that those products are in  
18 those sites. And, as I also mentioned in testimony,  
19 they are available, depending on the specific shelter  
20 in different places, so some shelters have them  
21 available, for example, at the front desk. Other  
22 shelters have them in pantry areas where there are  
23 other kinds of products that are also made available.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Uh, and they just as readily  
25 available in our respite centers or any of the

2 locations that are housing newly arrived asylum  
3 seekers?

4 MELANIE WENIGER: Absolutely. So, menstrual  
5 products are available at the Humanitarian Emergency  
6 Response and Release Centers, the HERRCs, which are  
7 managed by New York City Health + Hospitals. And  
8 those products are available, alongside other kinds  
9 of personal hygiene products, in supply rooms on  
10 site. And, then, uh, sanitary pads are available in  
11 the respite centers, which are run by New York City  
12 Emergency Management as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And that was going to be my  
14 followup question in terms of what those products  
15 are. So, there are some disparities. So, you're  
16 saying some locations have both pads and tampons, and  
17 some just have pads, or?

18 MELANIE WENIGER: So, that's something I would  
19 have to follow up and get back to you. My  
20 understanding is that menstrual products... Is that  
21 menstrual products, I believe that means both pads  
22 and tampons are available in HERRCs. I need to  
23 follow up about what exactly is available in the  
24 respite centers.

25 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

2 So, a question I have for... a question I have  
3 for essentially, uh, everybody, uhm, because I have  
4 heard different things about the quality of products  
5 available at the different sites.

6 Are... You know, what are the considerations  
7 that were made in determining the quality of  
8 products?

9 And just to give some examples from multiple  
10 reports that we have gotten, uhm, some made by  
11 students, who were provided with inappropriately  
12 adult-sized products for example; some by  
13 incarcerated individuals who have received pads more  
14 suitable for wounds than menstruation; and some by  
15 shelter clients who have used... Have had to use  
16 multiple products at once in order to prevent  
17 leakage. And, so, there has been a real concern  
18 about a lack of quality or poor quality of the free  
19 period products.

20 Uh, has anything been done to rectify these  
21 issues?

22 MELANIE WENIGER: Well, I can speak first and then  
23 defer to my colleagues for more specific answers.

24 So, in terms of the types of products and the  
25 variety of products, that is something that we are

2 actively looking into about what the agencies are  
3 providing and how we can provide more variety to meet  
4 more New Yorkers' needs. So, we are looking at  
5 developing new product specifications that can guide  
6 purchasing in the future to provide more variety, so  
7 that people... clients are receiving products that  
8 are aligned with their needs or more aligned, for  
9 example, with their preferences, their age, et  
10 cetera.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And I think that it... If I  
12 may, the... that is not just a question being  
13 provided with more variety, but raising the floor and  
14 making sure that at the most basic level that the  
15 quality of the products are good enough to serve  
16 their function.

17 With... Would the other agencies also be able to  
18 answer that, please?

19 JOHN SHEA: Sure, so it was actually when we first  
20 rolled this program out many years ago, uh, it was  
21 with partnership of the Council. We did a pilot  
22 program in Council District 21, uh, and got feedback  
23 through a survey of the principals for the products  
24 that we had provided, and got positive feedback.

25 But, since then.. [CROSS-TALK]

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: From the principals, not the  
3 students?

4 JOHN SHEA: We wouldn't reach out directly to the  
5 students. We would expect that the principals would  
6 have gotten that information from the students.

7 Uh... [CROSS-TALK]

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, it... and, I'm sorry, but  
9 it...

10 JOHN SHEA: Sure...

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Just to be... Like, do you  
12 know for a fact that the principals were giving  
13 feedback based on engaging with students, or whether  
14 the principals looked at the products and, said, hey,  
15 I think these are fine? [CROSS-TALK]

16 JOHN SHEA: Sure. So, that was the intent. But,  
17 my point is, we had sent that survey to the  
18 principals... [CROSS-TALK]

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay.

20 JOHN SHEA: to get that feedback from the  
21 students. But, our information was from the  
22 principals. Uh, and, again... [CROSS-TALK]

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, but do you know that  
24 that's what happened? I guess, I would just like  
25 more details. You know, when you sent this out to

2 the principals, did it specifically say, hey, what  
3 you're required to do is survey your students to find  
4 out what they think? Or was it just a, like, a, hey,  
5 tell us what you think?

6 JOHN SHEA: Oh, excellent question, and I can get  
7 back to you with that information.

8 But, I will say that we have definitely heard the  
9 concerns about both quality and variety of products  
10 that are being provided. And was mentioned by my  
11 colleague, we are actively engaged with The Menstrual  
12 Equity Group to have those conversations and to see  
13 what else we could do.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah. Because, I will tell  
15 you, students will tell you. I mean, students are  
16 probably one of the most active participants in our  
17 participatory budgeting processes. Students, when we  
18 did, at least in my district, an education town hall,  
19 students came in and were talking exactly about that.  
20 Not a single parent mentioned ,you know, some of  
21 these things, but it was students who were bringing  
22 them up talking about their experiences. And, so, if  
23 it not coming directly from students, there is  
24 definitely a [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

2 JOHN SHEA: Uh, I can tell you the best part of my  
3 job is actually engaging with the students.

4 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I'm sure!

6 JOHN SHEA: the issues for me. Because, I know I  
7 am going to get straight feedback, that's for sure...

8 [CROSS-TALK]

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: That's right.

10 And, DOC, please?

11 KAT THOMPSON: Sure. So, our people in custody do  
12 have the ability to make complaints. So, we pulled  
13 our complaint history just for calendar 2023. We  
14 have five complaints that were in the categories of  
15 supply, uhm, there was a complaint regarding  
16 inappropriate search, that must have intersected with  
17 some menstrual products; a lack of information; a  
18 mandated service; and then another jurisdictional  
19 complaint.

20 Every complaint is looked into by our Office of  
21 Constituent Grievance Services and followed up on.  
22 Separate to that, I think, just in terms of our  
23 supply, like I had already gone through what we have  
24 currently available, certainly variety I think is  
25 important. Every human being is a different, unique



2 individual. So, all of the different reasons why  
3 ,you know, difference and options matter, I think are  
4 important.

5 So, our current level of options is not just one  
6 or two. We have couple -- more than two. But, I  
7 think, uh, certainly it is a great point. And, so,  
8 we will be happy to look into that further as well.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. And I want to stick  
10 with, uh, you all at DOC for a moment. There was an  
11 April 20 of 2017 New York Times article reporting on  
12 issues related to product quality and barriers to  
13 access. You talked about it a little bit more  
14 broadly, but can you go into a bit more of detail on  
15 the guidance that both jails, and if you can speak to  
16 police stations, or anywhere a person might be in  
17 custody with regard to period products?

18 Like, where... Where do those guidelines live?  
19 What do they include? Like, what are the specific  
20 directives that employees are given?

21 KAT THOMPSON: So, I don't know specific guidance  
22 per se, whether it is in any of our policies or  
23 directives. I do know that in the intake, we say two  
24 are available per PIC. However, there are buckets of  
25 them there. So, if you need more, you could certainly

2 get more. Uhm, and I am going to ask Chelsea to  
3 comment as well, she has more information....

4 [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Well, and I... And I  
6 certainly, I want to give Chelsea that opportunity to  
7 comment. But, I will say that I have concerns about  
8 a policy that is, like, in writing, what is memorized  
9 is two per person incarcerated -- which is not enough  
10 product obviously -- but, we give as needed rather  
11 than codifying or memorizing a policy that makes  
12 certain a person's need is met and is not ,you know,  
13 reliant on the common sense of the person who is  
14 charged with their custody or the... I don't even  
15 want to say generosity, because it shouldn't take  
16 generosity to be able to access these products. But  
17 ,you know, like, why is that? Why is it that is what  
18 written is two, but then sort of the unwritten,  
19 unspoken policy is, but if they more... I just think  
20 that's the... it doesn't make sense to me. So, I am  
21 wondering if you can make sense of it?

22 CHELSEA CHARD: Yes, I would just clarify that  
23 the... The number two kind of that quantity is what  
24 we are directly providing immediately upon intake to  
25 anyone.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm?

3 CHELSEA CHARD: So, that is just to make sure that  
4 everyone has some immediately -- more than one ,you  
5 know, some accessible number. And, then, if you need  
6 more beyond that, you can ask. And, then, again, as  
7 we discussed, once you are in the housing area,  
8 people are taking those freely. So, we are not  
9 limiting the number of products that we are  
10 distributing to them or giving out to them. Because  
11 we are not just giving products to them piecemeal.  
12 That specific number was just, let's get... Make  
13 sure people... [CROSS-TALK]

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah.

15 CHELSEA CHARD: have something immediately, and,  
16 then, they can continue to ask or grab from  
17 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And... And for a bit more  
19 clarity, when you said that an incarcerated  
20 individual can take them freely, are they available  
21 somewhere they can grab, or do they have to be  
22 requested by a... to a corrections office or some  
23 other DOC employee to get those?

24 KAT THOMPSON: Okay, so, right now, if you walk in  
25 an intake, and I think, like, you said, you have been

2 in, right, Council Member to take a look? There are  
3 buckets of pads right there on site for the officers  
4 to distribute. But, there are also propped up and  
5 available with each cell. They're in the clinics, in  
6 the nurse's, the infirmary. But, they're also in the  
7 housing area, inside our A station, and, then,  
8 through actually, you just make a request, and then  
9 that A station officer is just passing it through to  
10 the people in custody who are asking. In some  
11 housing areas, they are outside any housing area  
12 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: A station is The Bubble, yeah?

14 KAT THOMPSON: The Bubble... [CROSS-TALK]

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so, they would have  
16 to... In order... So, if they are not in the  
17 infirmary -- actively in the infirmary -- or they are  
18 not in a certain center or something like that, in  
19 order... And they are just in their housing, they  
20 would have to ask, uh, the Bubble Officer to give  
21 them products?

22 KAT THOMPSON: Inside of that scenario or they are  
23 outside in the housing area and just readily  
24 available.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And, do we know, like, where  
3 that is the case and how that is determined? Why  
4 they would be out and readily available in some  
5 housing units, and in the Bubble in other housing  
6 units?

7 KAT THOMPSON: And Chelsea in her preparation  
8 did look into this matter a little. So, I would like  
9 you to take that one Chelsea, thanks

10 CHELSEA CHARD: Sure, so, uh, some of the  
11 determination is made kind of on a housing area  
12 basis, like, that have to do with classifications.  
13 It can also have to do, if certain people are  
14 misusing the products in some instances, and, so,  
15 again, they are not be restricted in that we are  
16 restricted the number of people can have. Uhm, but  
17 we are just sort of monitoring a little more closely  
18 if people are misusing them. In some of the A  
19 stations, depending on the configuration of it, even  
20 if it is kept in the A station, people can kind of  
21 reach into a window and still freely grab them. But,  
22 some of that is made on security determinations and  
23 the classification of the individuals in those  
24 housing areas.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. Now, obviously if there  
3 is... I'm just going to give an example, there...  
4 You're in a... You're in gen pop, and on the floor  
5 that you're on, you... There is... The officers on  
6 shift think that there is some sort of heightened  
7 security concern, and, so, the menstrual products in  
8 the Bubble and we have to ask for them, right? What  
9 are the consequences, because we have heard these  
10 reports before, for a corrections officer who  
11 withholds period products from incinerated  
12 individuals? And how can those incarcerated  
13 individuals find recourse? Now, I know that you had  
14 mentioned that constituent sort of complaint process,  
15 but what is... What is the disciplinary side of  
16 that?

17 CHELSEA CHARD: So, I am not aware of that  
18 scenario. Certainly that would be... It would be...  
19 We would have an issue with that. I mean, this...  
20 You... If you need a product you should have access  
21 to it just like toilet paper. So, I will look into..  
22 We will take a look at, if there is a specific  
23 example and come back to you in terms of when that  
24 happened, what was actually done in terms of  
25 discipline.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I almost can't help but say,  
3 but it's... when you say toilet paper, because there  
4 have been times that I have visited that folks did  
5 not have access to toilet paper or toothpaste or  
6 hygiene products or cleaning supplies or lots of  
7 other things.

8 Could you tell me what facilities concurrently  
9 have? I know that you have brought said they are  
10 kind of available everywhere. But, if you could be  
11 more specific on where these products are available.  
12 You know, does it include every male facility, every  
13 female facility? Does it include SHU, right? Does  
14 it include RMAS? Like, do... Could you just break  
15 down all of the different types of housing and  
16 whether or not menstrual products are available in  
17 those locations? And if it is, uh, a particular  
18 area, like, protective custody or something like  
19 that, like, it... Exactly how it is available and  
20 what the process is for accessing?

21 KAT THOMPSON: So, throughout Rosie's uh, we have  
22 got all of our buildings supplied within there, the  
23 infirmary, the nursery, the intake. That is where  
24 you are going to see those supplies. In the courts,  
25 and Chelsea can talk a little further on that.

2 Separately, if people are ordering them through  
3 commissary, they're going to come with the commissary  
4 delivery, which is weekly.

5 CHELSEA CHARD: Right, as I spoke to earlier, for  
6 the male facilities, we do have them available  
7 through the LGBTQ+ staff offices. And so folks can  
8 ask for them. Again, right, they have the tablets,  
9 so can discreetly message folks or they can ask  
10 officers or counselors or anyone on the housing area  
11 that they encounter if they... If they are not  
12 seeing an LGBTQ+ staff soon and know that they may  
13 need them, so they are not available in the housing  
14 areas per se in the male facilities, but they are  
15 available by requests and they will bring them ,you  
16 know, as many as they need, uh, as frequently as they  
17 need... [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And that will be the same  
19 product, uh, process if somebody was in protective  
20 custody or was in... found themselves in solitary,  
21 or?

22 CHELSEA CHARD: Yes, so, we don't have solitary  
23 confinement, but if someone was in protective custody  
24 or one of those other areas, then that would be the  
25 same process. They could request in those manners.



2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I won't argue with you on that  
3 one. It's not the focus of this hearing. But, uhm,  
4 thank you.

5 Uh, just give me a moment here. Let me see if...  
6 Does anybody have... Do you have followups?

7 Can folks also describe some of the outreach  
8 efforts to inform eligible individuals to access free  
9 menstrual products? You know, during the pandemic,  
10 uh, in other languages, how... efforts to address  
11 the stigma around menstruation is incorporated into  
12 those things?

13 MELANIE WENIGER: I can start. I think in terms  
14 of outreach, every agency is doing what it needs to  
15 do to ensure that their clients know about their  
16 rights to access products. So, whether that is ,you  
17 know, at intake, in the shelter context, uh, in the  
18 school context I think, uhm, they are available in  
19 the school bathrooms. And as [INAUDIBLE] spoke to,  
20 like, are students are being taught about health  
21 education, informed about ,you know, they see the  
22 dispensers in the bathrooms. I.. We recognize that  
23 this is something that we would like to do more of  
24 and do a better job about making sure that people  
25 know about their right to access products and where

2 those products are available. And we are working to  
3 do that now in terms of developing materials and  
4 making sure that those materials are going to be in  
5 many different languages -- all of the City's  
6 official languages.

7 And in terms of the shame and stigma, I think we  
8 recognize ,you know, shame and stigma is rooted in  
9 patriarchy and misogyny, but also in... It can also  
10 be sort of addressed with education. And I think  
11 that that is something that we are very mindful of,  
12 that education helps to do that. And as Despina sort  
13 of alluded to, uhm, the City is relaunching the  
14 Sexual Health Education Task Force that is going to  
15 work to ensure that all New York City students are  
16 able to access high quality, comprehensive sexual  
17 health education, which includes, obviously, topics  
18 of menstruation, but also other kinds of topics  
19 beyond just the biological components of health like  
20 healthy relationships, medial literacy, and gender  
21 identity and expression. And, so, we know that that  
22 is going to be part and parcel of this work to reduce  
23 shame and stigma and to help more New Yorkers be  
24 aware of their rights to access products and where  
25 they can find those products available to them.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

3 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: I think that I would also want  
4 to add that one thing that we have been speaking  
5 about is the students having direct access to  
6 products in well stocked dispensers, taking away the  
7 need to ask anybody for a product. That is really  
8 important. And that is actually... I meet with the  
9 deputy commissioner who heads The Office of School  
10 Health every two weeks. And that is a sort of dual  
11 officer, he reports to The Department of Health and  
12 reports to The Department of Education. And that is  
13 one thing that we spoke about, we're adamant about  
14 it, it is really taking out the need for students to  
15 ask and having free access to the products that they  
16 need, and taking away some of the sort of the  
17 embarrassment, the stigma, et cetera.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

19 I just have a couple more questions, and then we  
20 will go over to public testimony.

21 I know that we were not able to get an amount for  
22 ,you know, what a single pad or tampon costs the  
23 City, because I think you said it varies. Is that  
24 correct?

2 ROMAN GORMAN: That's correct for varying  
3 agencies, but I could just talk about on behalf of...

4 [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah...

6 ROMAN GORMAN: DCAS's. It comes to about .07¢ a  
7 pad.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Seven cents a pad? All right,  
9 and you do not, uh, purchase tampons?

10 ROMAN GORMAN: Currently we do not purchase  
11 tampons... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. And how much is spent  
13 per agency on period products?

14 KAT THOMPSON: Okay, so, our total spending in  
15 2021 was around \$27,000, for 2022 \$51,000, and, then,  
16 year to date for 2023, we are at about \$39,800.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

18 DOE?

19 JOHN SHEA: Yes, we will have to get back to with  
20 that information but we will.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. And, I guess this  
22 question is mostly for DOE, and why I imagine it  
23 might be inverse, because we are seeing the census go  
24 up on Riker's Island. But, I am curious as to how  
25 spending on menstrual products was impacted by the

2 pandemic. I know that DCAS mentioned that it went  
3 down, uh, there wasn't a need to order as much, and  
4 you were ordering PPE instead. But, what is the case  
5 for both DOC and DOE?

6 JOHN SHEA: As you are aware, during the pandemic,  
7 the first year schools were closed, and, then, the  
8 second year, we were in hybrid, so schools were not  
9 fully occupied. So, we did see a decrease, as I  
10 mentioned earlier, whatever existing stocks we had we  
11 distributed during the pandemic to the community. But  
12 after that, it just continued to grow our spending  
13 over time.

14 CHELSEA CHARD: Yeah, so, for us, of course our  
15 spending is dependent on the population that is  
16 there. The population certainly did dip during the  
17 pandemic, because of the first wave of releases  
18 related to the pandemic. So, our spending, uh, we  
19 don't have the 2020 numbers with us, but I imagine it  
20 would have gone down [INAUDIBLE] the distribution...  
21 [CROSS-TALK]

22 KAT THOMPSON: Yeah, we have distributions here.  
23 So... Menstrual Product Department Distribution  
24 there. So, we have in 20... Let's say 2019, uh, it  
25 looks like 1,600 regular pads were distributed to

2 facilities and 267 TAMPAX tampons by 2020, that  
3 number dropped down to 709 for the pads, and it  
4 stayed in between [600,555,700] for the next four  
5 years. And, then the tampons, as we discussed  
6 earlier, it's always been consistently around 250.  
7 That would probably be cases. I would have to come  
8 back and let you know what that number is, too. And,  
9 then, we have this period of 2021, 2022, and 2023  
10 where we are... They were on hand, but they were not  
11 being put in the facilities until they come through  
12 commissary.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I am a little bit confused by  
14 the fluctuation in purchase. Like, one, I think it  
15 is great that at intake we are finding whether or not  
16 an individual in custody menstruates. Like, I think  
17 that that is critical. But, I just ,you know, I  
18 think there needs... We need to get to a place where  
19 we are absolutely eliminating the need for folks to  
20 buy menstrual products through commissary, especially  
21 when we are talking about, vast majority pretrial  
22 detainees, who are quite literally being paid slave  
23 wages. And, so, I... I just... In my mind, there  
24 shouldn't be gap, and folks should be getting access  
25 to those things.

2 But, I want to thank everybody for your testimony  
3 today and for taking all of our questions.

4 And I think we are ready to move on to public...

5 Oh, no, actually, I have one more question for all of  
6 you.

7 This is probably one of the most important  
8 questions before we move to public testimony. I just  
9 want to know, like, what are your biggest challenges?  
10 And, obviously, this is a priority for our council.  
11 And, so, in addition to what are your biggest  
12 challenges, what can we do to help?

13 KAT THOMPSON: First of all, thank you for holding  
14 this. I have appreciated this experience. And I  
15 think it is a great topic, and I think this  
16 absolutely needs to be routinely done. So, from my  
17 perspective, it has been very positive to be here.

18 Now, in terms of our challenges, again, I think  
19 we talked a little bit about, right, making sure we  
20 have distribution readily available all the time and  
21 that we are tracking that. I think that is probably  
22 just our most basic logistical challenge. And I  
23 think, we'll take a look, but ,you know, certainly we  
24 want to talk to you again on the legislation that  
25 you've got up and we've expressed our potential

2 concerns. But, I think this is... We are in a good  
3 place to continue collaborating with you on this  
4 matter.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

6 JOHN SHEA: Yes, so, I also want to thank the  
7 committee for the opportunity to talk about this.  
8 For me, I think what you have raised here with  
9 ensuring that dispensers are stocked and product is  
10 available is certainly something that we need to work  
11 on better. Understanding that we want to respect  
12 people's privacy, we still want to make sure that we  
13 have a way to get the information if there is  
14 something that is not available to them. So, I think  
15 that would be the biggest challenge, and we  
16 appreciate your comments on that. And, again, of  
17 anybody has any specific schools, that is what we are  
18 here for, and we are going to address those  
19 immediately.

20 DESPINA ZAHARAKIS: Thank you very much for  
21 providing this space for this conversation. As I  
22 have said before, my health team, my entire office,  
23 and I are extremely happy that this conversation is  
24 happening. Our focus is health education. And I  
25 think we continue to work on the provision and the



2 teacher training for quality... quality health  
3 education to all of our students. We want to make  
4 sure that our resources are match our initiatives.  
5 And, so, we are really focused on making sure that we  
6 are not just doing a rollout of a product, we are  
7 really making sure that our students and our schools  
8 have the information that they need in order to  
9 access and use the products appropriately. And we  
10 continue to have plan for conversations that need to  
11 happen at all levels, you know, teacher instruction,  
12 principal information, and reiteration of what they  
13 need to be doing at the school level, the working  
14 groups, and the committees trying to develop, to your  
15 point, sort of formalizing requests and hopefully  
16 polices for us to implement in schools. But, the  
17 cross agency approach, the cross DOE approach is  
18 something that will, I believe, and I expect will  
19 harvest the results that we want to see... that we  
20 all want to see. So, thank you again.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

22 MELANIE WENIGER: I echo all of my colleagues'  
23 comments. Thank you so much for having this hearing  
24 and having this conversation. I think we recognize  
25 the areas where we would like to do better and exceed

2 our legal obligations. And, so, we are actively  
3 thinking about materials, outreach, how to address,  
4 as we have talked about already, like, stigma and  
5 embarrassment and things like that. I think we  
6 recognize, we would like to better understand from  
7 our clients that we are serving ,you know, what is  
8 their experience like, what are their preferences? I  
9 think we recognize and would like to understand more  
10 and get some more of that feedback. And, then, also  
11 just addressing what we discussed earlier about  
12 variety, quality, et cetera. So, we really  
13 appreciate this opportunity to speak to you all today  
14 about these issues. And we appreciate the intent of  
15 the legislative package, and we look forward to  
16 talking to you about it further.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

18 I also want to note for the record that we have  
19 been joined virtually by Council Member Gennaro.

20 Thank you all.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair, and thank  
22 you very much, members of the Administration.

23 We will now hear testimony from the public. I  
24 would like to remind everyone that I will call up

2 individuals in panels, and all testimony will be  
3 limited to three minutes.

4 I would like to note that written testimony,  
5 which will be reviewed in full by committee staff,  
6 may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after  
7 the close of this hearing by emailing it to  
8 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

9 For the first panel, I would like to call up  
10 Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, Marni Sommer, and Gabriela Lopez  
11 Castillo. You may begin when ready.

12 GABRIELA LOPEZ CASTILLO: Good afternoon,  
13 everyone. My name is Gabriela Lopez Costilla. I'm a  
14 recent college graduate, and I've had the honor of  
15 being able to work within the menstrual equity  
16 community since 2020 at the Youth Advisory Council  
17 for the Organization of Period.

18 I wanted to share a little bit of my personal  
19 experience growing up with experiencing period  
20 poverty and understanding how important menstrual  
21 equity is when I was younger and seeing how important  
22 it is now.

23 When I was in the eighth grade, I discovered that  
24 the word "period" had immense power. As a kid in a  
25 middle school health class, I quickly noticed that

2 bringing up "periods" had the power to bring the  
3 following: nervous silence, snickers, teasing, and  
4 awkward laughter. Not a lot of words can do that, but  
5 "period" was able to do so.

6 The mere mention of periods, or "I'm having a  
7 women's issue", would bring beads of sweat to my male  
8 gym teacher's forehead, allowing me to escape class  
9 so I could hide away in a bathroom to deal with what  
10 was happening to my body every month.

11 My school didn't provide menstrual products, and  
12 my classroom didn't make it a comfortable place to  
13 discuss what any of us were experiencing. And because  
14 of that, I never talked about my periods to anyone,  
15 not even my mom, for over a year. I would steal pads  
16 out of her bathroom, hoping that my mom wouldn't  
17 notice -- which she did -- and I would secretly  
18 stockpile them, hiding them in my pencil case so no  
19 one would know the real reason I would leave the  
20 classroom for 30 minutes at a time.

21 When I look back at this time, wondering why I  
22 did all of that, I know now that it's because I had  
23 cemented the stereotype that periods were  
24 embarrassing, a bodily function that for some reason  
25 I had to hide away. The stigmas that surround periods

2 had subtly ingrained themselves in my 12-year-old  
3 mind, and I had no one at the time to reassure me  
4 otherwise.

5 Our society has reinforced social taboos and  
6 gender stereotypes that stigmatize menstruation as  
7 unclean and undignified. This issue has been  
8 prevalent for years, and because society told us that  
9 our normal bodily functions are unimportant and  
10 shameful, our laws have subsequently reflected that.  
11 And that is why we need menstrual equity, and we need  
12 these bills to be passed.

13 Menstrual equity, as we all know here, calls for  
14 the ending of period stigmas and pushing for  
15 education and access to products for anyone who needs  
16 them. Access is vital, and across many demographics,  
17 it is our students, our incarcerated persons, and our  
18 Black and Brown youth, who have come from low-income  
19 backgrounds, who are most ardently affected by a lack  
20 of it.

21 Menstruation is a human rights issue and is an  
22 integral part of sexual and reproductive health and  
23 rights. And bypassing legislation like the bills  
24 discussed today, we can continue to address it as  
25 such. We need these bills to provide increased

2 education, accountability, and to continue to ensure  
3 that menstrual products are provided for all who need  
4 them. [TIMER CHIMES]

5 So, I conclude with this, although I can't help  
6 what I went through when I was 12 years old in middle  
7 school, I don't want any young person going through  
8 menstruation to ever feel like they can't approach  
9 their biological functions with the dignity and  
10 respect that they deserve. And I know we can all  
11 agree on that, thank you.

12 MARNI SOMMER: Hi, I am Marni Sommer, Professor of  
13 Sociomedical Sciences at The Mailmen School of Public  
14 Health Columbia University, and it is an honor to be  
15 here today.

16 Thank you to the Council for the opportunity to  
17 bring an academic program of research to bear on a  
18 pressing social issue. In fact, I will be talking  
19 more about the global and scope of what you are doing  
20 and where this sits.

21 The existing impending legislation has begun the  
22 effort towards a menstrual equity and menstrual  
23 justice in New York City; however, we have a much  
24 longer way to go, and New York has the opportunity to  
25

2 continue to lead the country and the even the world  
3 on these issues.

4 I will speak to two significant gaps that warrant  
5 immediate attention and require only minimal  
6 resources -- and, in fact, one of them was addressed  
7 today.

8 First, well important to ensure menstrual  
9 products are available and easily accessible in  
10 elementary, middle school, and high schools in New  
11 York City for all who need them, optimal use of  
12 resources, as we talked about, requires appropriate  
13 education about how to use them, and we are sorely  
14 wanting on that score. The absence of mental health  
15 education, guidance, and support as a regular feature  
16 of school-based socialization leaves too many young  
17 people anxious, confused, and often times fearful of  
18 their periods. More significantly, it leaves them a  
19 prepared to managed their periods confidently both in  
20 and out of school, poorly equipped to seek healthcare  
21 when they experience menstrual pain and/or heavy  
22 bleeding, and ill-informed with respect to their  
23 lifelong reproductive and menstrual health and well-  
24 being. The bill (1058) sponsored by Council Member  
25 Farías related to education on feminine hygiene

2 products seeks to address part of this gap, but I  
3 think we could do more in terms of providing holistic  
4 menstrual education.

5 And I will leave samples just... We did research  
6 across the US with girls, so I have copies for  
7 everybody, *A Girl's Guide to Puberty & Periods*, that  
8 might well take its spot in school libraries here.  
9 We may have a long way to go for education  
10 curriculum, but we can put it in the school libraries  
11 similar to books we have done in Africa, Asia, and  
12 other parts of the world.

13 Second, important, this legislation ignores the  
14 larger pressing part need for menstrual friendly  
15 public toilet facilities for New York residents  
16 tourists and commuters. My team and I are wrapping  
17 up at six city study around the world: Barcelona;  
18 Kampala, Uganda; Manilla, Philippines; New York City;  
19 Osako, Japan; and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil,  
20 conducting menstrual friendly public toilet audits in  
21 business districts, tourist districts, transit  
22 stations, and residential park or plaza in each city.  
23 By menstrual friendliness, we mean a public toilet  
24 that is safe, clean and accessible -- as all those  
25 aspects are needed for anyone who menstruates -- but



2 also has free or low cost menstrual products  
3 available and mechanisms for the sweet disposal and  
4 waste management. There should be appropriate  
5 signage, so an adolescent girl, woman, or anyone else  
6 who menstruates doesn't have to frantically search  
7 when she feels like it's time to change a pad or  
8 tampon.

9 Regrettably, preliminary analysis has New York  
10 City falling well behind many other cities [TIMER  
11 CHIMES] in low and middle income countries with  
12 respect to both supply in quality. A growing number  
13 of observers has taken note of that disgrace.

14 We could lead the country on this issue if we  
15 put our minds to it - becoming a city that champions  
16 the gendered needs of those moving around the city.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, and just very  
18 quickly, we are very excited about the homework. I  
19 know I have a ready library in our district office,  
20 so we would be happy to have that up and available to  
21 folks.

22 I know Council Member Farías has a comment.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: First and foremost, thank  
24 you to both of you testifying.

2 I just wanted to say thank you for the book. I  
3 also am very excited. We love getting stuff that we  
4 can refer back to that helps to expand our knowledge  
5 base.

6 But, also, I wanted to just flag it, and if you  
7 can take time to look at it and get back to me,  
8 Council Member Menin and I introduced this past  
9 Stated Meeting, Introduction 1179, which is related  
10 to menstrual products in City bathroom facilities.  
11 So, that might be hitting your second point. We are  
12 constantly and consistently trying to keep adding  
13 bills to our menstrual equity package, and answer for  
14 some of the larger needs. So, if you can look at  
15 that language and let me know what you think of it, I  
16 will relay that back to Council Member Menin, thank  
17 you.

18 MARNI SOMMER: Thank you, will do for sure. We  
19 were very excited to see that.

20 JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF: Hi, good morning, everyone.  
21 I am actually thrilled to follow both of you. My  
22 name is Jennifer Weiss-Wolf. I think I first sat  
23 in this room in the spring of 2015 when I brought  
24 this issue to the New York City Council. And I was  
25 thrilled to work with then council member and

2 Finance Chair, Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, to bring  
3 to bear the first menstrual equity laws, truly in  
4 the world, to consider menstrual and menstrual  
5 access under this umbrella of menstrual equity for  
6 New Yorkers. New York City has been pioneer, and  
7 for that I am always extremely proud.

8 I sit here a little frustrated today, too, I  
9 guess. I appreciated your questioning. I do wish  
10 the representatives from the agencies had stayed to  
11 hear from some of the citizen experts who are here.  
12 Because, the implementation of these laws over the  
13 past, I guess it is seven years now, has been less  
14 than full throated. And I think it would be fair  
15 to say that folks who prioritize menstrual equity  
16 would not necessarily feel that that is  
17 reciprocated by how these laws have been  
18 implemented and thought through.

19 So, I would urge all of you as council members  
20 to really make this your priority to bring this to  
21 bear in terms of follow up with the various  
22 agencies.

23 A Menstrual Equity Workgroup was referenced  
24 several times, none of us advocates are aware of  
25 that or are participants in that. And I think that

2 the city agencies would be wise to bring in the  
3 expertise of folks who are working on this issue,  
4 not just in New York City, but around the country  
5 and around the globe.

6 I think also that since ,you know, with the New  
7 York bills, when they were passed into law in 2016,  
8 were imperfect. They were novel at the time. And  
9 they were radical at the time. And, again, so much  
10 pride that New York City led the way. But, in the  
11 seven years that have passed, many jurisdictions,  
12 including major cities, uh, states, and even at the  
13 federal level in this country and globally, have  
14 passed laws and have been successful in  
15 implementing them in very creative and innovative  
16 ways. I would really urge that the City take on  
17 some sort of comparative study, so that everyone  
18 isn't shooting in the dark when they are thinking  
19 about what a best practice might look like. Again,  
20 there is an advocacy community that is very robust  
21 and very willing to participate -- as well as  
22 leaders, your counterparts in other cities and  
23 state legislators around the country.

24 The last thing I just want to put in the mix  
25 is... And I think it became apparent in some of

2 the answers of the various agency spokes people,  
3 that the pandemic really did change the way we do  
4 business, the way we look at our cultural  
5 obligations, and the ways we can implement the  
6 kinds of future [TIMER CHIMES] we imagined with  
7 these bills so that we are not necessarily just  
8 leaning on public... not just the public agencies  
9 in the facilities themselves, but we are thinking  
10 of something more expansive when we think about how  
11 to reach people. The school building example was  
12 the perfect one in the question about what people  
13 can bring home with them over the weekend.

14 But, anyway, the buzzer rang. I did this free  
15 thought as I tend to do. I am happy to always be a  
16 resource and answer questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. A couple of  
18 things that I would love to share is, one, I share  
19 your disappointment that it appears that the  
20 Department of Correction left. I will say that CGE  
21 and... Are you a DOE representative back there?  
22 Just CGE? So, DOE and DOC left. CGE stuck around,  
23 thank you for sticking around.

24 And, then, the other thing is, I would love to  
25 chat if there are legislative interventions, if

2 there are policies, if there are budget line items  
3 that we could be advocating for, I am all ears.  
4 Please email my office. I would love to put our  
5 heads together with myself and my legislative  
6 director. We would be happy to be creative and  
7 explore -- especially all of the legislative  
8 interventions that might be available to us at the  
9 city level to kind of ,you know, up the ante on  
10 expanding access and equity.

11 [PANEL AGREES]

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

13 Does anybody have any questions?

14 Well, thank you all for...

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

16 Our next panel will be Suzanne Herman and Laura  
17 Stausfeld.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much you were  
19 awesome.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin when ready.

21 SUZANNE HERMAN: Good afternoon, thanks for  
22 having me. My name is Suzanne Herman, I am the  
23 Legal Director at Period Law.

24 Period Law is a National nonprofit organization,  
25 but based here in New Yorker, and we consider

2 ourselves the period equity movement's lawyers  
3 fighting for tax free, toxin free, environmentally  
4 sustainable menstrual products freely available to  
5 everyone who needs them.

6 I won't repeat. Obviously, we are fully in  
7 support of this package of bills. I am especially  
8 here today to talk about 1055, which we completely  
9 appreciate the recommitment to making sure that the  
10 2016 laws are implemented.

11 I guess that I will just say that I was also a  
12 little bit concerned by the seeming, uhm, surprise  
13 of the DOE administrators, uh, seeming to insinuate  
14 that they didn't know that dispensers were not  
15 working properly or to alert them if a school's  
16 dispensers were not working properly. I know  
17 anecdotally, and I know you all know that it would  
18 be easier to name the schools where they are  
19 working properly. Right?

20 So, we have a student volunteer of ours named  
21 Alysa (phonetic) who submitted written testimony,  
22 which I would urge you to read, about an experience  
23 of hers where she missed class time and actually  
24 another student missed class time, because she had  
25 to ask her for a pad, which is an extremely common

2 occurrence. And it is something that snowballs  
3 really easily.

4 Period Law launched an anecdotal survey amongst  
5 high school students this year. Obviously the  
6 school year has just started, so the responses are  
7 not really in yet. But, so far, one in seven of  
8 the students that we surveyed reported having  
9 adequate access to menstrual products in their  
10 schools. So, I think that speaks for itself.

11 Thank you so much for bringing these, again, to  
12 attention, especially two years after a Workgroup  
13 that ,you know, I know things moved a lot slower  
14 the last two years -- another two years -- but  
15 every time we bring it up, it can't hurt, so, thank  
16 you.

17 LAURA STAUSFELD: Hi there, my name is Laura  
18 Stausfeld, and I am the Executive Director of  
19 Period Law. And I am began working as a lawyer  
20 committed to achieving menstrual equity with Jen  
21 Weiss-Wolf back in 2016. And we continue as Period  
22 Law, and Jen continues to ideate great policy.  
23 But, we are tasked as the only lawyers who are  
24 continuing this work to follow up on policies  
25 passed and make sure they are enforced.



2 So, I am here really with a couple of ideas and  
3 concerns. And I echo Jen that we would love very  
4 much to be part of the Workgroup for menstrual  
5 equity.

6 And I also want to bring up another concern that  
7 Period Law works on and is very close to home for  
8 me, is the safety and quality of period products  
9 and to begin a conversation with you about making  
10 the procurement process in New York City an  
11 opportunity to provide 100 percent organic cotton  
12 products, which today are the safest available.  
13 Because these laws are meant to serve the most  
14 vulnerable populations in the City, school  
15 children, people who are incarcerated, people who  
16 are in shelters who have exposures to all sorts of  
17 environment hazards, it is vitally important to  
18 provide the best quality products. And in written  
19 testimony that I will submit online after this  
20 hearing, I will provide some data that we have  
21 about some of the pesticides and dioxins and  
22 other... PFAS and other concerns about the  
23 products that are being supplied.

24 I also want to mention that New York State has a  
25 green purchasing program that I believe may not be,

2 uh, be being used or referred to by some of the  
3 agencies yet. Because, the, uhm, date that the  
4 DCAS... that the procurement folks who are here  
5 today referred to 2016 rules. In April of 2022,  
6 the Green New York Group added menstrual products,  
7 and created new specifications which are quite...  
8 they are strict. It is not clear, and I can get  
9 more information about this -- but the products  
10 being supplied will meet those specifications.  
11 And, again, that is our purview, that is our job as  
12 the lawyers for menstrual equity, to make sure  
13 those products meet those standards. And we would  
14 like your help with getting access to seeing what  
15 products are being provided... [TIMER CHIMES] Also  
16 to work with you on allowing us to work with the  
17 different agencies and report back to you as your  
18 partner. So, I would love to be able to speak with  
19 you about becoming officially partnered with you to  
20 work with the Workgroup and work with The City  
21 Council, thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much for your  
23 testimony.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes the in person  
25 portion of our public testimony.

2 We will now move to remote testimony. If you are  
3 testifying remotely, once your name is called, a  
4 member of our staff unmute you, and you may begin  
5 once the Sergeant At Arms sets the clock and cues  
6 you.

7 Currently, we have person signed up for remote  
8 testimony, and that is Tiffany Munroe. Tiffany  
9 Munroe, you may begin once you are unmuted and the  
10 sergeant cues you.

11 TIFFANY JADE MONROE: My name is Tiffany Jade  
12 Monroe, a Black trans woman from Guiana, South  
13 America. I am the Trans Justice Coordinator for  
14 Caribbean Equality Project, an NYC based community  
15 organization that empowers, advocates for, and  
16 represents Afro and Indo-Caribbean, lesbian, gay,  
17 bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming, and  
18 queer immigrants in New York City.

19 The Caribbean Equality Project is here today to  
20 stand with Council Member Amanda Farías our partner  
21 in government, to reaffirm our commitment to health  
22 equity in New York City.

23 The proposed period equity package of bills will  
24 expand access to period product, care, and dignity

2 to all New Yorkers impacted by the criminal justice  
3 system through incarceration.

4 In New York City [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE]  
5 are housed by their sex and not their gender when  
6 incarcerated. Having a period already causes  
7 transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive people  
8 gender dysphoria, but the dysphoria becomes  
9 heightened with [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE]  
10 products labeled as "women's health".

11 Transgender, gender nonconforming, and gender  
12 expansive people with menstruating bodies can feel  
13 alienating when accessing period products  
14 categorized as "women's products", and they may  
15 even avoid purchasing them altogether.

16 Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, founder of Period Equity,  
17 which advocates for affordable, accessible  
18 menstruation products, says anyone who menstruates  
19 needs to be a part of the discussion and decision  
20 making about their own health and well-being.

21 Period equity is gender equity. Women's rights,  
22 human rights, LGBTQ+, and racial justice health  
23 issues -- this package of bills will provide  
24 additional information on period products and  
25 menstrual hygiene products to students, expand

2 access to free menstrual products to students in  
3 elementary schools and require the New York City  
4 Department of Education to report on the  
5 distribution of menstrual products in schools.

6 We call on the New York City Council to ensure  
7 migrants, asylum seekers, and our homeless  
8 population also have access to period products.  
9 Homeless transgender men face barriers when  
10 accessing period products at shelters. Women's  
11 shelters, if they can, will offer the products,  
12 while men's shelters will likely have little to no  
13 options for those who menstruate.

14 We applaud the Women's Caucus for advancing  
15 legislation to affirm all New Yorkers who have been  
16 historically disproportionately impacted by police  
17 violence and false arrest -- including black trans  
18 people, sex workers, immigrants, [TIMER CHIMES]  
19 LGBTQIA+ people, and even protestors.

20 Period equity is trans equity... [CROSS-TALK]

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 TIFFANY JADE MONROE: We must protect the health  
23 and safety of all bodies who experience a period,  
24 especially many trans and nonbinary people. Thank  
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much, Tiffany,  
3 it is always good to see you even virtually. And I  
4 want to thank you for ,you know, uplifting the need  
5 for gender expansive and inclusive language, as  
6 well as, uh, access in our correctional facilities  
7 -- free access in our correctional facilities. So,  
8 thank you for testifying.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. If there is  
10 anyone present in the room or on Zoom that hasn't  
11 had the opportunity to testify, please raise your  
12 hand. Seeing no one else, I would like to note  
13 that written testimony, which will be reviewed in  
14 full by committee staff, may be submitted to the  
15 record up to 72 hours after the close of this  
16 hearing by emailing it to  
17 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

18 Chair, we have concluded public testimony for  
19 this hearing

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. Again, I want to  
21 thank all of the staff present here today, and also  
22 the folks who work in the background, for helping  
23 prepare for and execute this hearing. I want to  
24 thank everybody for testifying. I think ,you know,  
25 a couple of things we do know -- access, there is a

2 gap in access. And although we have been very  
3 clear with what our ideal is or, uh, sort of the  
4 standard we have set for ourselves, we have not yet  
5 met it. And, so, we have a lot of work to do here.  
6 And, then, the last point is just echoing some of  
7 the testimony saying that ,you know, we were  
8 leading the way back in 2016, and there really is  
9 an opportunity here for us to lead again. There is  
10 a lot more that we could be doing.

11 So, I am looking forward to reviewing all of the  
12 written testimony and coming back and continuing to  
13 strive for better.

14 So, thank you, everybody.

15 [GAVELING OUT] [GAVEL SOUND]

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 4, 2023