



Testimony of Loree Sutton, M.D., Brigadier General, U.S. Army, Retired  
Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services  
New York City Council Committee on Veterans and Committee on Finance  
Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget Hearings – Veterans  
Council Chambers, City Hall  
1:00 pm, Friday, May 20, 2016

Good afternoon, Chair Ulrich and Chair Ferreras-Copeland as well as respective members of the Committee on Veterans and the Committee on Finance. My name is Loree Sutton and I am honored to serve as the first Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS). Thank you for the opportunity to meet and review the Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget with respect to the City's newest agency.

Let me start by acknowledging this historic moment -- and your indefatigable dedication to the wellbeing of NYC veterans and their families. . . Looking back, this past year brought forward a convergence of leadership – the Mayor, the Speaker, Mr. Chairman and the Committee on Veterans, the Veterans' Advisory Board, Team MOVA, now DVS, and the impassioned community of NYC's veteran advocates – whose collective timely achievements, characterized by strong collaboration, constructive partnership, substantive legislation and pioneering achievement, are briefly summarized below:

The newly appointed Veteran Advisory Board was strategically selected to ensure a diverse range of service backgrounds, community engagement interests, and professional expertise.

We are the first city in the nation to add Veteran Designator to the municipal ID card program (*IDNYC*), thereby facilitating enhanced access to veteran-specific services and benefits for veteran New Yorkers.

The City's commitment to veteran mental health, as an integral element of *ThriveNYC*, includes program element support for increased outreach; 311 improvements to connect NYC veterans and family members to the *Veteran Crisis Line* as well as City resources and services; and holistic services through an integrative health model of care.

On the career front, expanded employment opportunities for veterans and their families continue to grow, with over 2,500 veterans and their spouses placed in jobs through the City's Small Business Services *Workforce1* centers.

Our productive working relationship with the City Council achieved multiple legislative initiatives voted into law, culminating in the landmark bill signing of Local Law 113, authorizing the establishment of a separate agency, Department of Veteran Services, to better serve our veteran community. As of April 8, 2016, the new law is now in effect and our transition to full operational capacity is well underway.

Through concerted leadership, community partnerships and collaboration, we supported and participated in multiple special events drawing national attention.

MOVA moved to newly renovated 22<sup>nd</sup> floor office space at 1 Centre Street in the David N. Dinkins Municipal building, named after the former Mayor, one of our City's most renowned veterans.

Initiating a new City tradition, the Mayor hosted a Flag Ceremony followed by the posting all Service flags at the entrance of City Hall, a gesture of respect throughout Veterans' Week honoring service to country.

We partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities and the City Council in support of reduced fees at NYC Parks Department Recreation Centers for seniors, young adults, veterans and persons with disabilities.

Under the leadership of the Mayor, in collaboration with the Speaker and the City Council, the City supported an unprecedented increase in our budget and staffing capacity, a historic investment already yielding increased citywide outreach and impact.

Last December, the federal government validated NYC's benchmark success in effectively ending chronic veteran homelessness; under the Mayor's leadership, veteran homelessness overall has decreased by over 70 percent since January 2014.

Indeed, what an incredible year it has been, leading us to today's FY 2017 Executive Budget Hearing, in which we are focusing upon the City's new Department of Veterans' Services.

The Mayor's Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget designates approximately \$3M for Personal Services and nearly \$1M for Other Than Personal Services for the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) initial year of operations, which commences on July 1, 2016. DVS is currently selecting highly qualified senior executive staff members for the new agency and will continue to

build the team and ramp up capacity over the ensuing twelve months, yielding DVS' full operating capacity by July 1, 2017.

With the creation of the Department of Veterans' Services, the City will now have the capability to develop a sustainable long-term strategy grounded in City leadership, public-private partnerships, and community engagement. Executing this strategy will yield the robust program development, direct services, and the research, policy and advocacy work needed to leverage the strengths and support the needs of the burgeoning population of approximately 500,000 veterans, service members of all components, and family members in New York City.

Below is a brief summary identifying key elements of DVS during its first year of operation:

### **DVS Vision**

To honor and serve veterans and their families as *our City's leading natural renewable resource*

### **Mission**

The Department of Veterans' Services is dedicated to improving the lives of New York City veterans and their families. Marshaling the collective resources of the City of New York, the Department will achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure that all veterans have permanent affordable housing and access to the support services needed to find and maintain their home
- Implement the *VetsThriveNYC* integrative health program to foster the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of veterans and their families
- Expand education and career opportunities for veterans through a rapidly growing network of City, public, private, and non-profit partners
- Provide the human and technological infrastructure for veterans and their families to gain City-wide access to benefits, resources and care through a leading coordinated service network

### **Structure & Function**

The new agency includes three operational units aligned with DVS key strategic priorities, each led by an Assistant Commissioner with direct policy, programmatic, management, advocacy and constituent support responsibilities, augmented through outreach teams that provide and coordinate services for veterans and their families. Designed to function as a matrix leadership organization, DVS will task organize informal teams, aligning strategy, structure, processes, rewards and staff, to focus on complex cross-agency challenges.

Many of DVS' administrative functions will be delivered through working with multiple City entities to establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) over the coming year. The new

agency has three new executive lines of support: communication; external affairs; and administrative support. Importantly, this increased capacity will allow DVS to exercise centralized input, direct oversight, and City-wide ombudsmanship to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of all contract funds appropriated for the benefit of veterans and their families.

Further, DVS will hire a Senior Advisor for Public-Private Partnerships & Development as well as a Chief Information Officer to work collaboratively across the agency and create a coherent strategic communications and inter-governmental affairs strategy; advanced platforms and systems for technology/ tele-communications; and enduring public-private partnerships required for DVS to deliver and sustain the highest quality services and support.

### **Actions & Priorities**

During our first year, DVS will focus upon multiple actions and priorities, including:

**Hiring exceptional professionals** to launch the new agency; build a cohesive team; create a generative culture; and develop the infrastructure, policies, operating procedures, services and programs needed for a start-up organization such as DVS to flourish. With military veteran status a plus – we are looking for service-driven and mission-focused team players, united in our commitment to make history by improving veterans’ lives in the greatest City in the world!

**Effectively ending veteran homelessness in New York City and sustaining the gains** through developing systems and applying resources to ensure that all veterans who become homeless are rapidly rehoused in permanent, affordable housing with the services they have earned and deserve. Specifically, DVS will work with its City and community partners, focusing on:

- Meeting “Functional Zero”: ending homelessness for veterans currently in shelter and developing a rapid rehousing system for housing new veterans within 90 days of entry
- Mitigating recidivism by bolstering ‘aftercare’ services through a dedicated coordinator who will drive assessment priorities and fully leverage the vital veteran peer coordinator role
- Leading efforts to systematize the assessment and housing placement of homeless veterans across systems and resources; scale this system to benefit all homeless New Yorkers

**Amplifying the First Lady’s ThriveNYC mental health roadmap through implementing the CoreFour integrative health model** to address the full impact of war – mind, body and spirit – for our veterans and their families, applying a peer-based community approach that increases engagement and lowers stigma and cost. Year one work includes:

- Forming a consortium of NYC service providers to participate in implementing the *CoreFour model*, which leads with trained peer intervention and integrates education, culture & the arts with holistic services and clinical care for veterans and their families
- Conducting City-wide outreach to better connect veterans and family members with a comprehensive range of resources specifically tailored to their needs and strengths
- Enhancing access to holistic services in non-clinical settings
- Engaging in the *ThriveNYC* education campaign to erode stigma and foster engagement

**Executing DVS' strategy for recruiting and connecting Veterans and their Families to City Careers, Services and Resources** through a phased action plan aimed at:

- Redesigning DVS website for direct access to City job opportunities
- Collaborating with DCAS City-wide Recruitment/*WorkForce 1* and the public/private sectors to identify HR best practices for City-wide Agency dissemination and application
- Standardizing City-wide intake forms to foster self-identification of veterans & families
- Establishing *NYC Veteran Business Leadership Consortium (VBLC)*, designed to enhance business and procurement opportunities for veteran business owners

**Launching *VetConnectNYC*, a digital platform/portal and coordinated service network** connecting veterans and their families with comprehensive referrals, counseling, and benefit support, including ready access through 311 digital platforms to the *Veteran Crisis Line*. We are currently working with the Mayor's Office of Contract Services to prepare a Pre-Solicitation Report, which will provide a description of the required services and software as well as other detailed requirements that will yield the most appropriate and effective procurement mechanism.

**Building upon the *Task Force on Behavioral Health and the Criminal Justice System* and its progress to date** through applying a systems lens to fully assess veteran needs in the criminal justice system, including coordinated access to housing, employment, legal and health services

**Improving access to veteran benefits** by training a team of outreach workers and establishing a satellite office in each of the boroughs to provide assistance direct to veterans in the community

**Collaborating with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York** to establish and maintain strategic partnerships with private entities, non-profit organizations and foundations to generate support and foster bold investment designed to launch advanced rapid prototypes and scale sustainable social impact initiatives to benefit NYC veterans and families of all generations

**Developing and implementing a digital trans-media plan**, including:

- Launching new website platform to facilitate interaction and access to resources

- Engaging strategic media outlets to amplify DVS key messages and activities
- Expanding the interactive universe of veterans connecting with DVS by setting and meeting social media targets for maximal awareness, engagement and activity

**Continuing DVS collaboration with MOSPCE, CECM & VSO partners** to assist and organize major veterans' commemorative ceremonies and special events which honor service. At this time of the year, we are especially delighted to welcome the over 4,000 Sailors, Marines and Coast Guard members who are preparing to visit New York City during Fleet Week, whose 2016 calendar of shipboard and community activities is brimming with amazing experiences throughout the city. At the end of this momentous week, New Yorkers will solemnly observe Memorial Day, commemorating the service and sacrifice of those who are no longer with us. We offer our thoughts and prayers for their loved ones, with a special moment of recognition and gratitude for our Gold Star Families. Families serve too – we owe them our heartfelt respect. In closing, I want to again thank all who have worked so hard to make our new Department a reality – we are truly all in this together. Working as a team, we have achieved so much and, yet, I know you will agree that our most important work is still in front of us.

To this end, I remain absolutely confident that the Mayor's Executive Budget provides the necessary resources to fully accomplish the DVS mission to improve the lives of NYC veterans and their families. Further, my optimism knows no bounds as we prepare to embark upon this next leg of our historic journey. In short, I am extraordinarily proud to serve shoulder to shoulder with each of you.

Chairman Ulrich, I want to take a final moment to again express my gratitude for your tireless leadership and for today's opportunity to meet with you for the first time as the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services. Thank you for *your* service.

At this time, I am pleased to address your comments and questions. Thank you very much.

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Testimony of Azadeh Khalili  
Executive Director  
Commission on Gender Equity

In Support of Intros #, 1122, 1123, and 1128

New York City Council  
Committee on Women's Issues

June 2, 2016

Good afternoon, Chairperson Laurie Cumbo and distinguished members of the Committee on Women's Issues. My name is Azadeh Khalili. I was appointed by Mayor de Blasio as the founding Executive Director of the New York City Commission on Gender Equity. I am joined today by colleagues from the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Corrections. It is a great pleasure to appear before the Committee to talk about this critically important topic.

I am pleased to report that the de Blasio Administration and First Lady Chirlane McCray have made an unprecedented commitment to New York City's women and girls. Let me begin by stating that the Administration strongly supports the City Council's efforts to expand access to feminine hygiene products for all New Yorkers. Everyone should have access to basic hygiene products and no one should go without because of cost. I am proud that NYC will be at the forefront of providing our students and vulnerable populations with free access to feminine hygiene products. I would like to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Councilmembers Julissa Ferreras-Copeland and Laurie Cumbo for leading a national conversation on these important issues.

Before I discuss the legislation, I want to provide some background information on the Commission on Gender Equity, its mission and goals, and some of the Administration's

key accomplishments.

### The Commission on Gender Equity

The New York City Commission on Gender Equity - or CGE - was created in July 2015 by Executive Order and signifies the Administration's commitment to deepening work in this important area, a commitment that is further evidenced by my appointment as the first ever full-time Executive Director of the Commission.

Executive Order 10 structures the CGE as an advisory body that supports City agencies to dismantle institutional barriers for women and girls and help achieve the Mayor's commitment to reduce gender-based inequality and build a safer, more inclusive and economically mobile city for women and girls.

### Role of the CGE

Our Administration is committed to leveraging the full power of City government to expand and increase opportunity for all New Yorkers, regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, and build a City that is safe and free of discrimination. The Mayor and the

First Lady have stated over and over that we cannot address inequality without making sure that we are creating good outcomes for women and girls.

Specifically, the Commission on Gender Equity:

- Serves as an advisory group to the Mayor on initiatives and methods to achieve the goals of the Mayor's platform to reduce inequality, with a focus on gender-based inequality;
- Advocates for women, girls, transgender and intersex residents and supports programs that have been created to remove barriers to full participation in all areas of women's personal and work lives;
- Studies the nature and extent of both the intentional and unintentional discrimination that women face and their impacts on the economic, civic and social well-being of women; and
- Makes recommendations to the Mayor regarding legislative or executive action to improve the lives of women.

### Achievements and Highlights

Over the past year, New York City has made huge strides towards gender parity, including:

- Establishing a historic partnership with UN Women and becoming the first American city to join the UN's Safe Cities Initiative;

- Setting new goals and improving upon MWBE policies and practices to make contracting opportunities more easily accessible for businesses owned by women;
- Creating innovative maternal mental health services through ThriveNYC, a mental health initiative led by First Lady Chirlane McCray;
- The historic roll-out of Universal Pre-K, which made it easier for many working mothers to continue full-time careers;
- Expanding paid sick leave to many of the lowest paid industries that employ disproportionate amounts of women;
- Signing new amendments to the Human Rights Law;
- Making unprecedented investments in domestic violence response and education through the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence;
- Issuing a personnel order providing six weeks of fully paid parental leave to City employees;
- Adopting an executive order to mandate City facilities provide bathroom access to people consistent with gender identity;
- Establishing the City's Commission on Human Rights as the first human rights agency in any major U.S. city to certify U and T visas for immigrant victims of crime and human trafficking;
- Framing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as a woman's issue and encouraging low-income women and mothers to take advantage of 200 free tax prep services and the EITC; and
- Appointing and promoting an unprecedented number of women to leadership positions in agencies and City Hall - with women serving in fifty percent of the Administration's senior leadership positions.

### Feminine Hygiene Bills

The Administration looks forward to working with the City Council to implement these important pieces of legislation around access to feminine hygiene products. This legislation is also inline with the New York City's strong Human Rights Laws.

### Intro. 1128:

I will now turn to Intro. 1128, in relation to ensuring that students in each school have direct access to feminine hygiene products in school bathrooms.

As you are aware, at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, the DOE, in partnership with Councilmember Ferreras-Copeland, launched a Feminine Hygiene Product Pilot program providing free tampons and sanitary pads at the High School for Arts and Business in School District 24. The pilot was created to meet the needs of students who might not have feminine hygiene products on hand during the school day. In March 2016, the pilot was expanded to 25 middle schools and high schools in School Districts 9 and 24.

In total, the Feminine Hygiene Product Pilot has placed 380 dispensers in bathrooms across 25 middle and high schools. The DOE is actively requesting feedback on the pilot to assess the impact of the program at each school. School principals have responded positively to the program.

In support of the pilot, families and students were provided a letter announcing the program and informational posters were placed by product dispensers. We asked schools to identify a trusted staff member to receive training and be available to assist students and parents with any questions or concerns. Parent workshops, student information sessions and feminine hygiene resources will also be made available in the 2016-2017 school year.

The Administration is committed to meeting the needs of the whole child, and providing easy access to feminine hygiene products in middle and high schools is essential to ensuring that our students have the supports they need to focus on learning and feel comfortable during classes.

While the Administration may have some technical amendments to this bill we are strongly supportive of this proposal.

Intro. 1123:

Intro. 1123 expands availability of feminine hygiene products in DHS, HRA, and DYCD run shelters.

The Administration fully supports the goals and intent of Council Int. No. 1123. The Department of Social Services (DSS) strongly encourages the Council to include all Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and Human Resources Administration (HRA) shelter facilities in the bill. This expansion will ensure maximum distribution of feminine hygiene products to all clients who require such products, including those in HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) shelters and at single adult male shelters.

As currently drafted, DSS is concerned, for example, that a transgender man or intersex individual residing in a DHS single male shelter or a HASA shelter would be excluded from benefiting from access to such products. Further, individuals residing in HASA shelters include female populations as well as young women. HRA and DHS are happy to work in partnership with the Council to develop language that is fully inclusive and ensures everyone who needs feminine hygiene products has access to such products.

HRA and DHS support education or a notice requirement that may need to accompany the availability of these products in men's shelters, and would look to roll it into broader agency-

wide sensitivity training. The bill is aligned with DSS and DYCD's goals of ensuring that all of our clients are treated with dignity and respect when accessing the City shelter system and other social services.

In order to maximize resources, we would like to work with the Council to limit the definition of feminine hygiene products to only include tampons and sanitary napkins. Limiting the definition means that HRA and DHS would not be responsible for providing specific brands or products that are unavailable locally or domestically.

Currently, each resident at an HRA shelter is provided with a toiletry packet and may request feminine hygiene products, which are provided in a timely fashion. The process is similar at DHS facilities: while toiletry bags are not offered, each client can request feminine hygiene products and such products are made available. As part of meeting the basic needs of youth in residential services, DYCD's runaway and homeless youth shelter bed providers already offer feminine hygiene products. These items are reimbursable program expenses under DYCD's contracts, and DYCD ensures that they are available to anyone that needs them.

The agencies feel strongly that every time a client is provided with these products, they're able to save a little more money on their path towards a more economically secure future.

### Intro. 1122

The NYC Department of Correction (DOC) recognizes the importance of ensuring that all females in its custody have adequate access to feminine personal hygiene products. All female inmates are housed in the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC). Within the facility, generic sanitary napkins and tampons are distributed to each housing area on a weekly basis. Additional supplies are provided upon request. I have spoken to my colleagues at DOC, who report that there are generally no access issues. If an area's supply does get low, the officer requests to have additional supplies delivered. In the unlikely event that an area does run out, a captain can obtain supplies from another unit until a new delivery arrives. The items are provided at no cost to the inmate. Brand name items can be purchased through the commissary, if someone prefers to use that option.

The Department's policy for the provision of all feminine hygiene products is guided by the standards of the New York State Commission of Correction (SCOC), the State's correctional oversight authority. DOC does not have any concerns about the implementation of Intro. 1122, as the bill matches the State standard and the Department's current policy is already in alignment with the proposal.

### Conclusion

I would like to reiterate that there is still much work to be done to insure true gender equality in New York City and I look forward to working together to make that happen. The Commission on Gender Equity helps to advise the Mayor and the Administration as we work to create meaningful and sustainable change for women and girls, regardless of class, race,

ethnicity, age, ability to speak English, sexual orientation and gender identity in New York City.

In closing, I want to recognize the incredible work of the Speaker, The Young Women's Initiative, and Chairperson Cumbo and the Committee on Women's Issues. Your work on behalf of NYC women and girls has been exemplary. We look forward to continuing to work collectively with our partners to advance gender equity.

These bills represent an important step forwards towards our shared goals. Together, we will ensure that all New Yorkers have access to essential medical supplies. I, and my colleagues from other effected agencies, would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

**Congresswoman Grace Meng Testimony**  
**Committee on Women's Issues Hearing, NYC Council**  
**June 2, 2016**

Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chairperson Cumbo, Members of the New York City Council Committee on Women's issues – thank you for this opportunity to testify on the important pieces of legislation in front of your Committee today. I have been working on the issue of menstrual equity for the past year, on many of the same issues addressed in the legislation before you.

Access to affordable feminine hygiene products is a serious and ongoing need for women and girls in the United States. When women are able to purchase quality, safe, and affordable feminine hygiene products, we are able to continue on with our daily lives with minimal interruption.

It is baffling to me that these products are still treated as “luxury items” in our laws, even though these are products that are absolute healthcare necessities. The American people have acknowledged this; according to a Feeding America Survey from 2011, people across the country, at all income levels, listed feminine hygiene products as, quote, “items that cannot be foregone or easily substituted.”

Women make up 50.8% of the U.S. population, and in an average lifetime, a woman will use about 10,000 tampons or pads—two of the most common types of feminine hygiene products. Purchasing feminine hygiene products is a continuous and costly expense that women must bear for much of our lives, from when menstruation begins at about age 12 to the time of menopause. Many women will spend at least \$7,000 over the course of our lives managing our menstrual flow.

When women do not have access to sanitary feminine hygiene products, they are forced to substitute cheap materials, and this can cause some serious health problems. When homeless women cannot purchase feminine hygiene products and do not have access to them at homeless shelters, they have been forced to. For homeless women, there are reports that a woman has been forced to “use rags or bleed through clothes until they throw [them] out or get donated clothes” when they do not have access to appropriate hygiene items. When girls can't afford feminine hygiene products, they may miss multiple days of school every month. When incarcerated women are not provided with an adequate supply of products, they are also forced to bleed through their clothes and in their living space. Unfortunately, this is happening every day in the United States.

Despite the obvious necessity for accessible and affordable feminine hygiene products, women and girls in New York City face clear gaps in access. Non-profits are attempting to fill some of

these gaps, and you will hear more about the dire need for these products from experts and advocates later in this hearing. But their work cannot, and should not, substitute for good government policies that can permanently close gaps in access.

New York City has a long, illustrious history at the forefront of civil rights and human rights in this country. Make no mistake – access to affordable, safe feminine hygiene products is right that is currently being denied to women and girls in this City. Intros 1122, 1123, and 1128 all take concrete steps to rectify some of these problems and ensure that women and girls in New York City have access to affordable feminine hygiene products. These pieces of legislation will serve as an example to cities across the country as to how changes can be made at a local level to address the menstruation hygiene management needs of women and girls.

Resolution 1012 was an excellent example of what can be accomplished when all levels of government work together. Councilmember Rodriquez and Councilmember Ferraras-Copeland have been advocating for the elimination of the State luxury tax on feminine hygiene products. I personally called on Speaker Heastie and Majority Leader Flanagan to help pass Assemblywoman Rosenthal and Senator Serino’s legislation, and advocates engaged in a massive media campaign to support the effort. With all parties working together, we are now close to eliminating the “tampon tax” in New York State. This Resolution was an important tool to help push that legislation through the legislature in Albany.

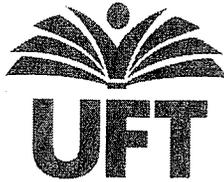
We need action at every level of government. That is why I introduced H.R. 3117, the Fund Essential Menstruation Products Act, to help women and their families mitigate the costs of purchasing feminine hygiene products. H.R. 3117 would add feminine hygiene products to the list of items that can be purchased with funds in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA). An FSA allows for individuals to place up to \$2,550 of their income in an untaxed account, where the money can be used for certain medical expenses like bandages, crutches, and prescription medications. It only makes sense to include tampons, pads and other feminine hygiene products as well. This legislation has been co-sponsored by Members of Congress from around the country.

I also plan to introduce legislation in the near future that would create a refundable federal tax credit for feminine hygiene products for individuals who regularly use them. I am currently in discussion with advocates and industry experts to best determine yearly expenses, and I will scale the tax credit accordingly. It would cover low- and middle-income individuals and families, and there would be no limit to the number of dependents who can claim this credit, because this is a cost for every menstruating woman. A family with three teenaged daughters, or a same-sex female couple, should receive a credit in accordance with their real costs. A feminine hygiene product tax credit would help families afford these costly items, and ensure that women and girls can continue to lead their lives without worrying about this basic healthcare cost.

In addition to this legislation, I was successful in adding feminine hygiene products to the list of eligible expenses for homeless assistance grants administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I've also engaged in a multi-agency campaign to address the various issues of menstrual equality and access to feminine hygiene products that women encounter every day – in homeless shelters, in prisons, in schools, and in the workplace. From my seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I'm pushing the U.S. government to develop a comprehensive plan to address menstrual hygiene issues for women and girls abroad.

Menstruation hygiene management is a complicated issue, because different populations of women and girls face different barriers in terms of accessibility and affordability of feminine hygiene products. Intros 1122, 1123, 1128 and Resolution 1012 are good examples of the types of government policies that can help address these disparate issues. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to ensure that women and girls have access to safe, quality and affordable feminine hygiene products, however we can. Period.

FOR THE RECORD



Submission to the Committee on Women's Issues  
of the New York City Council regarding  
the provision of feminine hygiene products in schools and Int. No. 1128  
by the United Federation of Teachers  
Michael Mulgrew, President  
June 2, 2016

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) wishes to thank Chair Laurie Cumbo and the Committee on Women's Issues for the opportunity to share our views on providing feminine hygiene products in middle and high schools and on the proposed amendment to the New York City Charter, Int. No. 1128.

Furthermore, we thank the Chair of the Finance Committee, Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, for leading the City Council's advocacy on behalf of our city's girls, many who come from families making tough financial choices.

We commend your committee for taking the time to review this important issue affecting as many as 200,000 middle and high school girls and to propose legislation that assures access and equity to feminine hygiene products for pubescent girls across the city.

On behalf of the 200,000 members of the UFT, we strongly support expanding the current Department of Education feminine hygiene pilot program beyond school Districts 9 and 24, in the Bronx and Queens respectively, to all public middle and high schools under its jurisdiction.

Our union is deeply committed to equity and access to a high quality education for all our students. The UFT's advocacy on behalf of our students with the highest needs is well documented. Our efforts extend from demanding equitable funding for academic resources and reducing class size to establishing Community Learning Schools where we strive to meet the needs of students and communities by connecting community service organizations, integrating health and wellness services and academic supports inside public school buildings, and more. We know that by removing barriers to learning, our members can educate and our students can thrive.

It is in that spirit that we support Int. No. 1128. We believe this amendment to the New York City Charter will help alleviate some of the stress associated with girls menstruating while at school, whether attributable to reticence to seek assistance or due to financial need. In our view, providing free, unfettered access to these products is good common sense, fosters equity and ultimately contributes to our students' whole health and self-esteem.

The issues raised by today's hearing aren't new and they're certainly not unique to New York City. Public schools have long grappled with how to best accommodate the health and wellness needs of girls who are menstruating. The response has varied from district to district and from school to school. Some schools have supplied feminine hygiene products via the school nurse or the principal. Others have had coin-operated dispensers in school bathrooms. The provision of these products should neither be ad hoc nor relegated to only those who can afford to pay.

The Department of Education's September 2015 pilot at the High School for Art and Business in District 24 in Queens convinced the administration to follow through on Council member Ferreras-Copeland's urging to expand the initiative. This past March, the DOE installed 380 dispensers containing sanitary napkins and tampons in the girls' bathrooms in all 25 middle and high schools in District 24 and District 9 in the Bronx.

As educators and providers of health care services, we believe that the administration should meet the health needs of every child. Despite the lack of empirical research connecting girls' school attendance while menstruating to the provision of feminine hygiene products in the United States, we believe that the pilot has shown promise.

In their review of our city's pilot, Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, vice president at the Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law, and Dasha Burns, CNN contributing producer, revealed, "Increased attendance rates have already been reported at the inaugural pilot site, up from 90 percent to 92.4 percent in just six months. This may be only the beginning, but it's a chance to further document what many already suspect: Supporting girls to properly care for their bodies during their periods supports their ability to learn."<sup>1</sup>

The UFT is always cautious in advocating for unfunded mandates. Recognizing that providing free products isn't free, this pilot thus far only cost approximately \$150,000. In our discussions with the DOE, scaling up this initiative would cost \$5.4 million in start-up expenses and would level out at around \$3.8 million to maintain. In our view, the department could absorb these costs. The benefits to our girls far outweigh the costs.

To the extent that providing these products at no cost to our students will remove any stigmas or discomfort they face and have the residual positive impact on school attendance, we see this as a win-win.

We thank Chair Cumbo and the Committee on Women's Issues for its oversight of the issues that affect the lives of our students and make it possible for them to learn in a welcoming, safe and healthy environment.

<sup>1</sup> "Why Feminine Hygiene Products Should Be Free in School," *Jennifer Weiss-Wolf and Dasha Burns, Newsweek, April 20, 2016*



Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell  
Associate Executive Director,  
Policy and Advocacy

Before the  
New York City Council  
Women's Issues Committee

*Regarding Feminine Hygiene Products*

June 2, 2016

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 72-year-old, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chair Cumbo, as well as the members of the City Council Committee on Women's for holding today's hearing regarding several City Council bills aimed at eliminating barriers to accessing feminine hygiene products. I would also like to thank Council Member Ferreras-Copeland for her tireless efforts on this issue, which has resulted in the successful pilot program in several schools. And finally, I would like to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito and Council Members Ferreras-Copeland and Rodriguez for introducing the bills we are discussing today.

We are also extremely pleased that Reso. 1012, calling upon the State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation that amends the Tax Law to exempt feminine hygiene products from all state and local sales taxes is essentially now moot. This bill has now passed in both the Assembly and the Senate and in response Governor Cuomo issued a statement indicating his eagerness to sign the legislation. We are extremely pleased that this regressive and unfair tax will soon be repealed. We are grateful to state leaders, such as Assembly member Rosenthal and Senator Serino who sponsored the bill, and the leaders in the City Council who helped in getting it passed.

CCC also strongly supports the Council's three bills being introduced today:

- Int. No. 1122, which would require the Department of Corrections to provide feminine hygiene products to inmates upon request;
- Int. No. 1123, which would require any female in temporary shelter (DHS family shelter and single adult women shelter, DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter and HRA domestic violence shelter) be provided with an adequate supply of feminine hygiene products;
- Int. No. 1128, which would require the Department of Education, in coordination with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to provide each school with an adequate supply of feminine hygiene products sufficient to meet the needs of its students.

CCC urges the City Council to pass, and the Mayor to sign, all three of these bills which will ensure that girls, young women and women, and particularly those who are low-income and/or vulnerable, have access to the feminine hygiene products they need.

CCC suggests that the City Council consider introducing additional pieces of legislation that would ensure that additional young women and girls, particularly very vulnerable young women, have access to feminine hygiene products as well. Specifically, we ask that additional legislation be introduced requiring:

- The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and its providers provide feminine hygiene products upon request for those young women in the juvenile justice system (secure detention, nonsecure detention, limited secure and non-secure Close to Home placements).

- The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and its providers provide feminine hygiene products upon request for those young women in foster care.

This is in no way to suggest that ACS and its provider agencies are not providing adequate feminine hygiene products to the girls in their care. But given that the City will likely be passing legislation regarding the other city agencies (DOE, DOC, DHS, HRA and DYCD) we feel that it would make the package comprehensive to be sure to include ACS and its providers given that children in the foster care and juvenile justice system are in the City's care and custody.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Testimony before the New York City Council**

**Women's Issues Committee**

**June 2, 2016**

Good morning, Chair Laurie Cumbo and members of the committee. I am Judith Arroyo, President of Local 436, D.C. 37 representing all of the Public Health Nurses and Public Health Epidemiologists who work for the City of New York.

I am testifying on Intro. 1128-2016: Provision of feminine hygiene products in schools. The bill is a puzzle to me and some of the members I represent.

Of our 1,000 members, 800 are the public health nurses who work in the New York City school system. We, along with the nurses of our sister union-the United Federation of Teachers- already provide free feminine hygiene products in the schools.

In addition to providing feminine hygiene products, we conduct the health classes to students on the development & changes their bodies will go through as they grow including classes on menstruation.

Hence, as I said earlier, we were a bit puzzled when we were told about this bill. Among my members the thought developed there may be a knowledge gap as to exactly what the public health nurses do in the City school system.

I am here to provide information & answer questions which may assist you not only in connection with Intro. 1128-2016 but also about health services in the schools in general.

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Committee on Women's Issues  
June 2, 2016

*Hi, my name is Lineyah Mitchell, I am currently a graduating senior at Brooklyn Technical High School. At my school, one of the largest in the state, there is little-to-no access to female hygiene products. There are no products in the bathrooms and if someone happens to need a pad at any time during the day they'll need to go to the nurse, and if they go between classes they'll probably end up late to class because in a school of nearly 6,000 kids, there's only one nurse. The nurse is also not allowed to distribute advil and can only let people lay down in the nurse's office for a limited amount of time (around 5-10 minutes). This means that almost everyone has to take note of the one friend who carries around extra pads and advil.*

*Generally, when my parents go grocery shopping, I'll ask my mom to pick up pads for me.*

*I wish it were easier to access products at my school. Where I could just go to the bathroom and there would be pads there, rather than having to go to the nurse and then bathroom while somehow avoiding being late to class and being penalized.*

*I am here speaking to the New York City Council because this is an issue that affects my life and the life of all other girls in high school constantly. It's something that's important to speak about, despite the stigma and embarrassment that generally encompasses it, and even though I am graduating this year, I hope to make a difference for those who come after me.*

Thank you, Council Member Ferreras-Copeland for the opportunity to address the committee. I am Jo Haines, Executive Director of PowerPlay NYC. PowerPlay is committed to developing girls and young women of NYC as leaders and as advocates for their own independence and success. As a partner in the City Council funded Sports Training and Role Models for Success or STARS Citywide Girls Initiative PowerPlay is a leader in the girls-youth development space and we're here to share our girls' firsthand experience with this important health issue.

Feminine hygiene products should be readily available to girls in school. PowerPlay has made it a point to have a supply of pads and tampons on hand at our programs for girls to take as they need them and we believe that the same approach should be used in all of our public schools. Girls should not have to encounter gatekeepers or other barriers to gain access to something that is a basic human necessity. Supplies are either not available at all, and when they are, girls need to visit the nurse to request a pad, which makes them late to class, eating into valuable instruction time. The young women aren't ill, this is all perfectly natural, yet by making them go to the nurse, we perpetuate a stigma that has no place today. The girls themselves are very clear on this issue: make pads and tampons readily available in school and soon it will simply become the new normal.

Today in America and in NYC, we should not have girls and young women, many who may not be able to afford menstrual products, ostracized and potentially absent from school, putting them at further risk of falling behind.

We agree strongly with CM Ferreras-Copeland that this is not something girls should have to ask for. It's basic common sense; it's basic human dignity and it's all about fairness and gender equity. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

# The New York Times

## Helping Women and Girls. Period.

By JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF  
JANUARY 28, 2015

A friend recently laughed about the time she was unloading the groceries and absent-mindedly put a box of tampons in the freezer, leading her pre-teen daughter to inquire whether they worked better when cold. We all have our stories – ranging from the funny to the mildly embarrassing to the mortifying – that revolve around menstrual mishaps and messes.

But for the more than 40 million women in this country living in poverty or on the brink of it – and for whom the cost of feminine hygiene products is yet another burden on an already stretched budget – periods are no joke. A year's supply of tampons and pads costs upwards of \$70 and is not covered by food stamps. For homeless women, the problem of lack of access to menstrual hygiene care is often compounded by "minimal access to safe sanitary spaces" like toilets and showers.

Around the globe, managing menstruation can be a debilitating, even deadly, problem – fueled by a combination of poverty, misinformation, stigma and superstition. One in ten girls in Africa misses school for the duration of her period each month. In Bangladesh, infections caused from filthy, contaminated rags are rampant. Menstrual hygiene has been linked to high rates of cervical cancer in India.

Here in the United States, where the economic and opportunity costs of menstruation for poor women have gone relatively undocumented, the problem hides in plain sight. That is, until Jessica Valenti, founder of Feministing and columnist for The Guardian, caused a firestorm when she proposed subsidizing sanitary products. She wrote: "Menstrual care is health care, and should be treated as such. But much in the same way insurance coverage or subsidies for birth control are mocked or met with outrage, the idea of women even getting small tax breaks for menstrual products provokes incredulousness ... because it has something to do with vaginas. Affordable

access to sanitary products is rarely talked about outside of NGOs – and when it is, it's with shame or derision."

Conservative talking heads exploded with righteous indignation and a torrent of vitriol jammed the Twittersphere. Free? Women living large off the government? The Washington Examiner lamented, "That, along with cries for free birth control or free whatever just because we're women stops looking like equality and more like a new class of privilege."

Marketing expert Nancy Kramer also posed the question, though with a different twist, in her 2013 TED talk and corresponding campaign, Free the Tampons, in which she makes the case that private businesses and public restrooms should provide supplies for women. After all, she points out, complimentary toilet paper and soap are made available. Why not tampons? Kramer has called upon companies and restaurants to take the lead – including her inaugural client (since 1981!), Apple Computer.

Kramer's TED talk managed to skirt backlash, likely because she didn't zero in on poor women or government subsidies. It is that raw intersection of poverty and reproduction that touches America's misogynistic nerve: fear of the welfare queen – having her period, having her birth control, having abortions, having babies – having it all.

The calls for reform that Valenti and Kramer have issued are sensible and much-needed: it is due time that we reconsider the scope of public benefits programs like food stamps – what necessities are excluded and why – and incentivize the private sector to lead by example. And entrepreneurial solutions being forged around the world demonstrate real innovation, especially those that promote replicable business models that empower women and make available safe, affordable feminine hygiene products.

But there is a vital place, too, for creative and compassionate community organizing. Local tampon donation drives are a simple, smart way to bridge the gap. Two teenage sisters in South Orange, N.J., Emma and Quinn Joy, recently launched Girls Help-

ing Girls. Period. to help ensure that women have the products they need, when they need them. "When we learned that women and girls often have to miss work and school because they can't afford the basic necessities, we were shocked," said Emma. Added Quinn, "Can you imagine not being able to go to work because you didn't have enough toilet paper to properly clean yourself?" Similar initiatives include DonatePads.org, The Period Project, Tampon Tuesday and a variety of homegrown projects and partnerships around the country.

The possibilities are endless. Canned food drives, organized regularly by many religious organizations, service groups and schools, could include requests for tampons and pads. Social groups, from book clubs to sororities, could tap their networks to raise awareness and collect supplies. And social media adds a fun factor (think ice bucket challenge): my family is posing a Valentine's Day challenge via Facebook, asking friends who plan to exchange heart-shaped boxes of chocolate to simultaneously donate a box of tampons. Truly, there's no simpler way to shine a light on this problem, meet a crucial need for thousands of women and girls ... and, for the rest of us, take some of the squeamishness out of addressing menstruation.

One recommendation: that participating collection sites – food pantries, shelters and schools – be presented with fully stocked care packages to give away. That is, donations should do more than offer a one-off emergency fix, but rather provide a long-term supply, several months at least, to empower low-income women to plan ahead and be better equipped to manage this critical aspect of their health.

When it comes to advancing women's rights and choices, and defining what it means to embrace a proactive reproductive justice agenda, tampon drives are a remarkably easy but infinitely meaningful way to help women take charge, and take care, of their bodies and their lives.

# TIME

## America's Very Real Menstrual Crisis

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*Women's biology shouldn't be a financial burden or a health hazard*

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BY JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF  
August 11, 2015

After his raucous display at last week's Republican debate, Donald Trump lashed out at Fox News moderator Megyn Kelly for questioning the litany of sexist insults he's hurled over the years. His conclusion: she's got "blood coming out of her wherever."

Period jokes are a dime a dozen, Donald. Half of the American electorate – indeed, half the world's population – copes with menstruation. Feminine products are a \$2 billion industry in the United States alone. But for those who live in poverty, lack of access to menstrual health care is more than a punch line.

The price of poor menstrual hygiene can be devastating, even deadly. It is linked to high rates of cervical cancer in India; in developing countries, infections caused by use of filthy, unwashed rags are rampant. Here at home, women who are homeless or incarcerated face similar risks when they can't access or afford sanitary products. Women have even been known to trade food stamps for tampons.

Around the globe, there is growing awareness of, and demand for solutions to, the financial burden of menstruation. The United Nations has declared menstrual hygiene a public-health, gender-equality and human rights issue, inspiring waves of global activism and innovation. In the United States the crisis has hidden in plain sight.

A social media-savvy generation is raising awareness and taking action. An enterprising team of graduate students at the University of Georgia devised a prize-winning initiative to

donate hygiene products to Athens-area shelters. A pair of New Jersey teens launched Girls Helping Girls. Period., a community collection drive. And this year's selfie craze #JustATampon – which originated in England and quickly went viral – has helped raise awareness around tampon taxes.

Creative charity and clever hashtags are part of the solution, no doubt. But they must not be a substitute for meaningful domestic policy reform.

Sales tax reform, especially, has captured headlines. New York and Ohio are among the 40 states that currently impose sales tax on menstrual supplies; legislation to axe the "tampon tax" has been introduced in both states. Activists in California are gearing up for similar advocacy in 2016. Will the remaining 37 states follow?

Meanwhile, our neighbors in Canada led a successful No Tax On Tampons campaign this year, eliminating the national Goods and Services Tax on tampons, pads, and menstrual cups as of July 1st. Across the pond and down under, activists in the United Kingdom and Australia are pressuring their governments to do the same.

The sales tax question speaks directly to the dire need for sound menstrual policy, access and education. Who possibly could have decided that tampons are not a necessity? Certainly not anyone who has ever had a period. Upon further examination of the kinds of items that are sometimes not taxed by states – a bag of M&Ms, a latte, even yachts and luxury jets – it becomes ever harder to justify. And while the cost savings of a sales tax break may sound meager at eight cents on the dollar, for those struggling to put food on the table, every penny counts.

On the policy front, New York City is breaking new ground. In June, City Council Member Julissa Ferrares convened the City's first-ever roundtable on menstrual health. A diverse array of community leaders – including advocates for the homeless, the hungry, incarcerated women,

and low-income students and families, along with reproductive health providers – came together to help inform policies to improve access. Among these: free tampons and pads for public school students (mirroring a program that makes condoms available for free), as well as at homeless shelters, food banks, job centers and public benefits offices; drugstore discounts for holders of IDNYC, the City's free ID card; and a push to eliminate the New York State sales tax on feminine hygiene products.

At the federal level, simple but meaningful change also can be achieved – for example, by amending the IRS Tax Code so that menstrual products are eligible for Flexible Spending Account allowances. We should also re-examine the scope of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (aka food stamps) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program and expand these to include feminine hygiene items.

Relatedly, passage of the Robin Danielson Act, introduced in the House by Rep. Carolyn Maloney and named for a woman who died of Toxic Shock Syndrome, is long overdue. The bill would require resources for independent research into the potential hazards posed by the synthetic fibers and chemicals used in the production of tampons. Says Maloney: "American women spend well over \$2 billion per year on feminine hygiene products, and the average woman will use over 16,800 tampons and pads over the course of her lifetime. Despite this large investment and high usage, there has been limited research on the potential health risks these products may pose to women."

Menstrual hygiene and health affects anyone who is a woman or who knows a woman. It matters to all of us. It is time we fight for a domestic policy agenda that is smarter than Donald Trump's period jokes – and as clever and effective as the latest hashtag campaign. I'm calling this one our #monthlymotivation.

# DAILY NEWS

October 9, 2015

## *For equity, give out tampons in schools: Girls from poor families need this basic need met, at no cost*

By JENNIFER WEISS-WOLF

Any woman who has ever been caught by surprise by her period — and who hasn't? — knows all too well the wave of panic that ensues. The mad scramble to find a tampon and a restroom, and gain reassurance that the world can't see the dreaded stain. For teenagers, the experience can range from awkward and uncomfortable to downright humiliating (cut to the nightmarish opening shower scene in "Carrie").

In practical terms, the inability to access menstrual products can affect girls' productivity — and physical presence — in school. A crisis that long has been documented in developing countries, it is also a problem here at home.

In New York City, more than one in four public school students lives in poverty. The ability to afford something as essential as a box of tampons or pads is often out of reach. At \$7 to \$10 a package, plus sales tax, a month's supply can be one expense too many for struggling families that are also trying to put food on the table, pay the bills and meet the rent.

Which is why the city's Department of Education should ensure that tampons and pads are made freely available in all of New York's public high school and middle school restrooms.

Without access to basic hygiene supplies, what is a girl to do? Infrequent changing of tampons or pads is unhealthy, unsanitary and unsafe. Not using one at all is unthinkable. Reusable products like menstrual cups are a tough sell among the preteen and teenage crowd, and school bathrooms lack privacy for proper washing and care.

Notwithstanding Jeb Bush's claim that the poor clamor for politicians who tout "free stuff," this much is true: No girl should have to miss school, risk her health or compromise her dignity because her body is functioning normally and she menstruates.

Distribution of feminine hygiene products through the city's schools would relieve as many as 200,000 girls of strain and stain.

At least some schools are waking up to the need. In a Corona, Queens, high school, when students returned from summer break this year, they found a modernized dispenser in the girls restroom, fully stocked with free tampons and pads. The dispenser is a new innovation, the brainchild of a national project called Free the Tampons.

This development is part of a pilot project spearheaded by City Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras, who began convening the city's first-ever roundtable on menstruation earlier this year.

A diverse array of community leaders — including advocates for the homeless, the hungry and incarcerated women, along with representatives from school programs and women's health provid-

ers — are coming together at City Hall to share the experiences of low-income New Yorkers and help inform policies and proposed legislation to improve access.

The Queens pilot includes a series of focus groups to gauge the needs and concerns of students citywide. The girls in those groups talked openly about what happens when their parents can't afford to buy tampons or pads on the very day they are needed — how hard it can be to be productive in class, or to attend school at all.

Others shared that while the nurse's office may offer an emergency stash of feminine hygiene products, having to ask for a tampon in front of a room full of people can be intimidating and embarrassing. Boys called out the inequality too, noting that with a little toilet paper and soap, all their basic needs are met in school restrooms.

Why not the same for girls — all girls? In a city that already mandates that condoms be provided to public school students free of charge, girls' needs are being systematically neglected.

The ability to manage menstruation is not an entitlement or privilege. It is a necessity. If something as simple as a tampon can keep girls engaged and productive in school, it is worth the modest investment.



TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Thank you for inviting me to testify today in support of the introduction of Local Laws 1122, 1123 and 1128.

I have been working with Council Member Ferreras-Copeland on the issue of menstrual equity and access for over a year – as well as with municipal, state and federal lawmakers around the country – and am proud to help advance this important legislation.

I'm a lawyer and an executive at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. I write extensively on the topic of menstruation and its impact on civic and social engagement and participation. With this testimony, I have shared a selection of op-eds I have authored on the topic for *The New York Times*, *TIME*, and the *New York Daily News*. My work, and that of many others here today, has helped catalyze and catapult the issue into the mainstream and make it one of national relevance and prominence.

Today I'd like to place the legislation being advanced by New York City in the context of the national and global landscape – and drive home why what's been proposed is so groundbreaking.

First, as we all know, the issue is by no means new. While menstruation has been a taboo and “off limits” topic since Adam and Eve, around the world there are legions of activists and innovators working to raise awareness of the devastating impact caused by lack of access to menstrual

products. There's more and more research, including a brand new study by FSG called *An Opportunity to Address Menstrual Health and Gender Equity*, that shows how menstrual hygiene is inextricably linked to the health, productivity, and dignity of women and girls. As you will hear from my colleagues at Zana Africa, for example, exciting innovation is being forged — particularly in developing countries, where circumstances are often dire.

America has lagged behind — in terms of awareness, innovation and policy. It is a problem that hides in plain sight here at home — though one that potentially impacts millions.

But that's beginning to change. A dedicated network of activists, journalists, policy makers and others have successfully ratcheted up the national attention being paid to the issue. Periods have gone public and political. The issue has captured headlines — so much so that NPR has dubbed this period "The Year of the Period" and *Cosmopolitan* magazine proclaimed it "The Year the Period Went Public."

My focus is on policy. One issue that has become prominent worldwide is that of sales tax exemptions on menstrual products (the "tampon tax"). Canada abolished its national Goods and Services Tax on menstrual

products last summer. A petition in the United Kingdom garnered 300,000 signatures and spurred a ruling by the European Union to allow member states to reduce the Value Added Tax on menstrual products to zero. Kenya not only eliminated the tampon tax, but since 2011, the Kenyan government has been budgeting about \$3 million per year to distribute free sanitary pads in schools in low-income communities.

In the United States, 40 states do not exempt menstrual products from sales tax. Since I launched a national petition, which was co-sponsored by *Cosmopolitan* magazine, 15 of those states have moved to make legislative change. New York State has led the way – it is one of three to pass legislation in 2016 to make it happen this year. We are awaiting Governor Cuomo's signature on the bill.

But sales tax reform only scratches the surface. It doesn't go nearly far enough. For those who are struggling, a tax savings of pennies on the dollar isn't likely going to provide anything close to real relief — which brings us to what the City Council is now doing.

Legislation to mandate freely available free menstrual products is a meaningful advance. It stands not only to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers, but also to be a catalyst for raising awareness and spurring further reform across the nation and around the world.

And the world is watching. On the schools issue, for example, the provision of tampons and pads has been deemed an issue of educational equity by First Lady Michelle Obama through her Let Girls Learn initiative. Inability to access menstrual products can affect attendance and productivity, a finding documented over and over again in developing countries. Yet nearly twenty percent of American teenagers live in poverty; here in New York City the number is even higher: one in four public school students live in poverty.

The cost of tampons or pads, at \$7 to \$10 each month, can be one expense too many for struggling families. And unlike toilet paper—which is freely available in public and school restrooms, funded by City budgets and viewed as essential to everyday health and sanitation—those living in poverty are left to access tampons and pads on their own.

If something as basic as an easy-to-access sanitary pad can keep girls engaged and productive in school, isn't it worth the investment? As Council Member Ferreras-Copeland says: "No-one has ever interrogated me over the City's toilet paper budget."

The City Council's legislation also addresses issues for those who are homeless and incarcerated. I've interviewed women who live on the street for my work

and they have shared the urgency – what it is like to not have access to clothing, underwear, laundry facilities, or private showers and toilets. All of this is exacerbated by menstruation. Inability to access tampons and pads is not just unsanitary and unhealthy for them – it is inhumane.

In the corrections system, inadequate allocation of pads compromises the health and dignity of inmates. The Correctional Association of New York released a study in February 2015 listing lack of access to menstrual products among the top reproductive health crises for incarcerated women in New York State (along with shackling inmates during labor). At one New York prison, doctors insisted that women show a bag filled with their used pads as proof they needed more. A lawsuit was filed in Michigan last year documenting the refusal of corrections facilities to provide adequate menstrual products, forcing inmates to routinely bleed through their clothes and not providing them a change of clothes until laundry day.

The focus on these three particular issues – access to menstrual products in schools, shelters and corrections facilities – is a result of the Council Member Ferreras-Copeland convening the City’s first-ever roundtable on menstrual health. The group includes advocates for the homeless, the hungry, incarcerated women, and low-income students and families, along with women’s health

providers. All have shared the experiences of their clients and corroborated that lack of access is indeed a problem.

The solution is so simple. New York can and should be the City to lead the charge for the nation.

When President Obama was asked about the tampon tax his response was that women's experiences aren't reflected because they're not always at the decision making table. Well, here we are in New York City – and gratefully, we have leaders like Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito promoting our health and lives with gusto.

New Yorkers are fortunate, too, to be represented by New York State Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal who has championed eliminating the tampon tax – and U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng, who convinced the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, administered by FEMA, to allow shelters to purchase menstrual hygiene products with grant funds (prior to her recommendation, toothpaste was an eligible expense, but not tampons).

They're reflecting our experience, proposing laws to help millions, and leading the way for the rest of the country. To quote Hamilton (whose lead actor Daveed Diggs just put out a viral video to champion menstrual equity): “History is happening in Manhattan and we just happen to be in the greatest city in the world.”

New York City will indeed make history for menstrual equity when it passes this legislation – and will lead the way for the rest of the world.

Menstruation falls squarely at the intersection of health, economic and education policy. Our whole society benefits when those needs are acknowledged and minded.

New York City now has the chance to improve the lives of its residents and advance a vital message: that the ability to manage menstruation is a necessity, not an entitlement or privilege. And that no-one should have to miss work or school, or risk their health, or compromise their dignity, because they menstruate.



**BROOKLYN  
DEFENDER  
SERVICES**

**TESTIMONY OF:**

**Andrea Nieves – Attorney**

**BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES**

**Presented before  
The New York City Council Committee on Women’s Issues  
on  
Introductions 1122-2016, 1123-2016, 1128-2016 and  
Resolution 1012-2016  
related to  
access to feminine hygiene products**

**June 2, 2016**

My name is Andrea Nieves. I am an attorney at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). BDS provides innovative, multi-disciplinary, and client-centered criminal, family, and immigration defense, as well as civil legal services, social work support and advocacy, for over 40,000 clients in Brooklyn every year. I thank the City Council Committee on Women’s Issues and, in particular, Chair Laurie Cumbo and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for the opportunity to testify today about the dire need for the City to provide quality feminine hygiene products to women in City jails.

Over the past 20 years, BDS has represented thousands of women detained on Rikers Island. Our female clients spend their time at Rikers at the Rose M. Singer Center, often referred to as “Rosie’s.” When compared to their male counterparts, our incarcerated female clients are:

- Much more likely to have histories of trauma and to be survivors of sexual and physical abuse;
- More likely to suffer from a mental illness (recently more than 70%) and chronic medical conditions;

- More likely to be unemployed or underemployed;
- Often the primary caretakers of children while in the community; and
- More likely to experience sexual abuse and trauma while incarcerated.

**The vast majority of the women at Rosie's should not be in jail; they are there simply because they are too poor to pay bail.** Notably, the bulk of the top charges that bring women into contact with the criminal justice system are related to histories of drug and alcohol addiction – a clear indication that the War on Drugs continues to wreak havoc in the lives of the clients, families, and communities we serve. In choosing to detain these women, the City is assuming responsibility for providing continuous quality care, including hygiene products and health care.

BDS strongly supports the three bills and one resolution before the Committee today. Access to feminine hygiene products is critical for women's health. Doctors recommend changing pads or tampons every three to four hours to prevent bacterial and fungal infections that may lead to serious health problems. We believe that all women and girls should have access to feminine hygiene products and are grateful to the City Council for proposing legislation to ensure that schools, shelters and jails across the City provide these items to women in need. These bills are critical to demonstrating a public consensus about the importance of access to feminine hygiene products and in bringing about a cultural shift in how we talk about and address women's issues.

While many prisons and jails across the country do not provide any free hygiene products to detained people, including feminine hygiene products, DOC does provide free sanitary napkins to women. However, women are only provided a small number of the free napkins, a supply frequently insufficient for women with heavier flows. According to a recent survey by the Correctional Association, 54 percent of respondents in New York prisons said they did not get enough sanitary napkins each month. This is consistent with the experience of our attorneys and social workers supporting our clients detained at Rikers. *Our clients tell us that they are generally given only 12 sanitary napkins at a time.* Women without a sufficient supply must then request additional napkins from guards, who often use the request as a way to control women and assert their authority over her. Our clients tell us that they have to beg officers for more free pads only to be treated with disrespect that make them feel ashamed. Furthermore, the free napkins are of very poor quality and most of our clients will go to great lengths to purchase name brand napkins from the Commissary. Our clients report that the free napkins are not properly absorbent and thus easily lead to staining of their uniforms.

Ms. R's story is a perfect example of how Rikers current policy on feminine hygiene products affects poor New Yorkers.

Ms. R, a 24-year-old BDS client, spent nine months detained on Rikers. She asked her BDS social worker not to visit her while she was on her period because she was worried about leaking through her uniform and having to walk the halls of the jail with a bloodstain. Ms. R had to choose between the shame of leaking blood while on her period and meeting with

her legal team. Ms. R. comes from a low-income family and worked overtime in the jail to pay for her basic needs including deodorant, soap and sanitary napkins. She shared that she did not have enough sanitary napkins and she would try to wear the same napkin for as long as possible to ration the supply she was able to purchase from the Commissary because the free pads were of such low quality.

**The current policy of providing women with unusable quality hygiene products in insufficient quantities after repeated requests does not meet the spirit of the bill as proposed. No woman should be denied her dignity or humanity because of her menstrual cycle, including when she is in school, living in a shelter or incarcerated. Today's hearing, along with the passage of Int. 1122-2016, are important first steps in codifying a right for women incarcerated in City jails to access feminine hygiene products.**

We are very grateful for Council's important work on this matter. However, legislation alone will not be enough. We plan to continue direct advocacy with DOC to ensure that all women receive as many sanitary napkins as they need, when they need them, without harassment and abuse from correctional officers. We hope that the City Council and our community partners here today will work together to ensure that DOC provides functional sanitary napkins, as the current offerings are of such poor quality that our clients report they are often unusable, except as shower slippers or as adhesives to hang photos of their children on the wall. In the future, we would like to see DOC provide female inmates with tampons as well as sanitary napkins, which allow greater freedom of movement and comfort.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. We are grateful to the Council for bringing to light the issues that low-income women face in obtaining feminine hygiene products in the City's schools, shelters and jails. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions about these or other issues at (718) 254-0700 (ext. 387) or [anieves@bds.org](mailto:anieves@bds.org).

**Testimony of Sola Stamm, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**

before

**The New York City Council - Committee on Women's Issues**

regarding

**Access to Menstrual Hygiene Products in NYC Schools, Shelters and Correctional Facilities**

**Int. No. 1122, 1123, 1128, Res. No 1012**

June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

Good morning Council Members Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Ydanis A. Rodriguez and members of the committees, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Intros 1122, 1123, 1128 and Resolution 1012. My name is Sola Stamm and I am a Health Justice Community Organizer at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), a non-profit advocacy organization. NYLPI's Health Justice Program uses a wide range of advocacy tools, including community organizing, individual representation, impact litigation, and legislative advocacy, to try to address and resolve health disparities throughout NYC.

With these advocacy strategies, we aim to eliminate discrimination and systemic barriers that limit access to health care, as well as address social determinants of health so that all New Yorkers can live a healthy life. It is from this health justice perspective that NYLPI strongly supports the passage of the legislation you are considering here today.

New York City is becoming an exemplary leader in working towards menstrual equity, particularly, in regards to the efforts advocates are making to eliminate taxes associated with menstrual hygiene products due to the FDA classification of these products as medical devices. Much like condoms, sunscreen, and prescription drugs—all of which are tax exempt in New York State—menstrual hygiene products are critical health care products. Notably, however, these products are often inaccessible to individuals and communities lacking economic resources.

The passage of Intro 1122, 1123 and 1128 would require DOHMH—the city's health department—to make menstrual hygiene products available in NYC schools, temporary shelters, and correctional facilities. Making these products available at schools sends students the message that each of their attendance and academic focus are valuable. Further, these bills would aim to reduce stigma associated with menstruation through the provision of menstrual education and informational resources. Additionally, by eliminating the barriers that individuals living in temporary shelters face in taking care of their health while also trying to get by on limited resources, this legislation sends a strong message that each of these individuals deserves the same access to health care irrespective of where they happen

to be sleeping at night. And just as importantly, incarcerated individuals would likewise not be limited to menstrual hygiene product rations, which often manifests as dehumanizing treatment from facility staff, or face financial constraints when having to purchase these items from commissary.

NYLPI is encouraged by the success and expansion of Council Member Ferreras-Copeland's Queens based pilot program that made menstrual hygiene products accessible in 25 different schools. The results of this pilot reduces shame that students experience toward their reproductive physiology and needs, and also demonstrates the connection between academic focus and accessible health resources. We are also encouraged by the bills before you today, and hope that future efforts continue to be made that reflect the realities of NYC students, temporary shelter residents and incarcerated populations.

In regards to the particular language in the bills before you, NYLPI proposes changing "feminine hygiene products" to "menstrual hygiene products". This modification of language is more inclusive to the spectrum of gender identities who experience menstruation. NYLPI also proposes that each bill specifies that menstrual hygiene products are made "free of cost" to individuals to clarify the standards of accessibility. Lastly, NYLPI recommends that in addition to public prisons, Intro. No 1122 make clear that immigration detention facilities in New York make menstrual hygiene products accessible, upon request, for the civil detainees held within them.

NYLPI thanks the New York City Council for its commitment to reproductive health advocacy, which it has demonstrated through the introduction of bills such as the ones before you today. Passage of Intro No. 1122, No. 1123 and No. 1128 is a necessary measure to ensuring that health resources and information are made accessible throughout NYC, and to reducing menstrual stigma. NYLPI thanks the Council for holding this hearing and for its commitment to the health and well-being of NYC communities, and we urge you to pass these pieces of legislation.

Thank you.

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Planned Parenthood of New York City

**Planned Parenthood of New York City  
Testimony on Expanding Access to Menstrual Health Products (*Ints. 1122-2016; 1123-2016; 1128-2016 and Reso. 1012-2016*)**

**June 2, 2016**

Good morning. I am Elizabeth Adams, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). I am pleased to provide testimony on the New York City Council's effort to expand access to menstrual products for New York City. Planned Parenthood of New York City thanks the Speaker of the City Council Melissa Mark-Viverito, Honorable Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Honorable Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Chair of the Women's Committee, and the entire Committee for their dedication to this issue and leadership in convening this hearing.

Planned Parenthood of New York City serves more than 53,000 patients annually in our five health centers located in all five boroughs. PPNYC provides sexual and reproductive health services including birth control; emergency contraception; gynecological care (including cervical and breast cancer screenings); colposcopy; male reproductive health exams; testing, counseling, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections; the HPV vaccine; HIV testing and counseling; pregnancy testing, options counseling (including adoption) and abortion. We offer health care services, counseling, and care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.

As a leading sexual and reproductive health care provider in New York City, we believe that all people deserve equal access to the health care and services that enable them to take care of their bodies and well-being. Comprehensive care includes personal hygiene, and for approximately half the population, this includes menstrual products at some point in their lives. As part of our ongoing efforts to make health services more accessible for our patients and our offices more supportive for our employees, PPNYC provides a free supply of tampons and pads in all of our bathrooms. These activities reflect our understanding that menstrual products can be a costly expense and should not be a barrier to one's personal hygiene care needs.

Access to menstrual products is a matter of public health. Menstrual products play a critical role in maintaining personal health and hygiene for millions of New Yorkers and without them, individuals with periods may be forced to use unsanitary products to staunch bloodflow, which can lead to infection and increased risk of disease, including cervical cancer.<sup>1</sup> For women living in shelters that often lack regular access to privacy or have to wait for clean showers or bathrooms,<sup>2</sup> menstruation can bring added risks of infections or a feeling of uncleanliness which can lead to depression. Menstrual health is an essential part of health care, and these health risks are often compounded by the economic burdens many New Yorkers are forced to confront. On average, a woman spends upwards of \$70 per year on tampons and pads. Current policies that discriminate against menstrual products as basic hygiene disproportionately impact women and low-income individuals with reproductive health needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, *Helping Women and Girls. Period.*, NY Times, January 28, 2015, available at: [http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/28/helping-women-and-girls-period/?\\_r=0](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/28/helping-women-and-girls-period/?_r=0)

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Goldberg, *For Homeless Women, Getting Their Period Is One Of The Most Difficult Challenges*, The Huffington Post, January 14, 2015, available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/14/homeless-women-tampons\\_n\\_6465230.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/14/homeless-women-tampons_n_6465230.html)

PPNYC supports the City Council Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to enact legislation removing menstrual products' classification as luxury items and affirming their status as health necessities. We applaud the State's recent passage of bill A.7555/S.7838, which recognizes menstrual products use in helping to "control a normal bodily function and to maintain personal cleanliness,"<sup>3</sup> and we look forward to the Governor signing this bill into law, in accordance with Resolution 1012-2016. The current non-exempt status of menstrual products does not reflect the essential role that these products play in maintaining personal health and hygiene and places an unfair economic burden on women. However, we also know that for many New Yorkers, even with the tax exemption, sanitary products are still out of economic reach, and we urge the New York City Council to pass the full package of legislation before you today.

The proposed bills would significantly improve the health and wellbeing of those in need of affordable menstrual care products. Intro. 1123-2016 would require that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provide feminine hygiene products to all female residents in temporary shelters, providing relief for many residents who often struggle to afford services for basic health needs. Menstrual products are not covered by food stamps and temporary shelters are frequently understocked, unfairly forcing low-income individuals with periods to pay more for their own hygiene. No one should be forced to choose between buying tampons or food, or having to subject themselves to using an unsanitary cloth. By providing all women in temporary shelters feminine hygiene products, New York City will become a leader in strengthening the rights of women living in shelters.

PPNYC also supports Intro. 1128-2016, which would require all schools to make menstrual products readily available to students in school bathrooms. For many students whose families may struggle to cover the cost of menstrual products, or who forgot to pack a tampon or pad before leaving the house and do not feel comfortable visiting the nurse's office, their period can be a dreaded experience, making focusing on school much harder. This is a critical time for young people's sense of self and wellbeing and we commend the law's requirement that middle schools and elementary schools stock menstruation hygiene products. We know it is often the students that get their periods at younger ages that are least prepared and most at risk of feeling shamed for their reproductive health needs. Providing ready access to menstrual products not only supports the health and wellbeing of our young people but also normalizes menstruation, pushing back against the period stigma so many women face.

We also applaud the Speaker and Council Member Ferreras-Copeland for introducing legislation that would require the Department of Correction to issue menstrual hygiene products to inmates immediately upon request. Access to feminine hygiene products is a basic human right and an issue of dignity and health. New York's jails can help address the health inequities many incarcerated women face by providing timely access to critical services that include menstrual products. Women should not be forced to acquire a medical permit or spend their commissary earnings to achieve a basic standard of hygiene.

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<sup>3</sup> As cited in: Margo Seibert, Jennifer Moore, Catherine O'neil, Natalie Brasington, & Taja-Nia Henderson v. The New York State Department Of Taxation And Finance, and Jerry Boone. The Supreme Court Of The State Of New York County Of New York, March 3, 2016. Retrieved at <http://www.ecbalaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Tampon-Tax.-Revised-Class-Action-Summons-and-Complaint-3-3-16-00243311x9CCC2.pdf>

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Planned Parenthood of New York City

At PPNYC, we see firsthand the harmful consequences economic barriers to health care can have on our patients and we are dedicated to providing supportive, confidential care no matter what. By passing this package of bills and resolution, increasing access to menstrual health services for inmates, temporary shelter residents and students, we can send an important signal that New York City is committed to increasing services, fighting stigma and reducing health care disparities in our City. As states across the country are engaging in this critical conversation on gender equity, we encourage New York to lead on this issue and pass legislation that would expand access to menstrual health care products.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue and I would be happy to take any questions or provide additional information.

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**Since 1916, Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC) has been an advocate for and provider of reproductive health services and education for New Yorkers. Through a threefold mission of clinical services, education, and advocacy, PPNYC is bringing better health and more fulfilling lives to each new generation of New Yorkers. As a voice for sexual and reproductive health equity, PPNYC supports legislation and policies to ensure that all New Yorkers—and, in fact, people around the world—will have access to the full range of reproductive health care services and information.**



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Testimony prepared by

**Rachel Sabella**

for the

**Committee on Women's Issues**

on

**Bills Related to Access to Feminine Hygiene Products**

**May 24, 2016**

on behalf of

**Food Bank For New York City**

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Good afternoon Chairwoman Cumbo and members of the City Council's Women's Issues Committee. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of Government Relations at Food Bank For New York City. Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today on increased access to feminine hygiene products.

For more than 30 years, Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization, working to end food poverty throughout the five boroughs. Nearly one in five New York City residents relies on our programs and services. Through our network of more than 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank's food distribution program provides approximately 64 million free meals for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including SNAP enrollment and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$150 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 42,000 children, teens and adults to sustain

a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts.

Food Bank For New York City appreciates the opportunity to testify today and is grateful for the opportunity to have participated in roundtables hosted by Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland on access to feminine products.

Nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on our city's emergency food programs. Because the main factor driving need at food pantries and soup kitchens is the inability to afford food – especially challenging in a city with high costs of housing, transportation, utilities and other basic needs – it should come as no surprise that the same families who seek assistance from food pantries or soup kitchens are often lacking for other necessities in their homes. When Food Bank For New York City receives donations of non-food items that low-income households need, such as cleaning products, household paper goods and hygiene products, they meet high demand from food pantries and soup kitchens on behalf of the New Yorkers they serve. Indeed, many emergency food providers solicit or receive donations of these items themselves. When feminine hygiene products are available at food pantries and soup kitchens, it comes as welcome and much-needed relief to the women and girls whose families are already making sacrifices to put food on the table. The feedback is the same: women have trouble affording these products and often turn to emergency food providers for help.

In February, the *New York Times* Lens Blog visited the Food Bank For New York City's Community Kitchen and Food Pantry in West Harlem, where a pantry client spoke about the choice she and many other low-income women face: "Do I buy feminine hygiene products when there are other necessities my family needs?" Unfortunately, donations of feminine hygiene products are not consistent, and our network of community-based charities is not always able to meet the need. We routinely hear about food pantries opening packages of pads or tampons to ration them out because there are too few for any household to receive a complete package.

While there is a robust safety net in this country to prevent hunger, cash assistance programs to assist low-income households with their non-food needs have been so weakened over the past few decades that they offer little meaningful support or assistance to the poorest families in our city, who must prioritize keeping the roof over their heads and then struggle to find the dollars for other basic needs.

Food Bank For New York City supports measures to increase affordability and access to feminine hygiene products for low-income women in our city. The bills discussed today are a great step forward, and we look forward to continuing to work with the City Council to ensure feminine products become affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

**Testimony for Monica Llaguno in regards to Int. No 1123**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Women's Issues Hearing**

**Scheduled for June 2, 2016**

Good morning, my name is Monica Llaguno, and I will discuss the last point of our research regarding how feminine hygiene products are provided and administered inside the shelters.

In shelters that provide menstrual products, women must ask staff members to provide them every time they need some. Women interviewed mentioned lack of privacy and confidentiality when asking for menstrual products and feeling uncomfortable having to ask for these products from male staff.

A woman interviewed had a history of long and heavy periods, and she felt that her increased need and therefore frequent requests were not believed by the shelter staff, which discouraged her from using this resource. Another woman with a similar flow expressed embarrassment from having to make numerous trips to the desk to ask for products from the shelter desk staff. However, as we asked women how these products should be provided, most of them did say they should still be kept at a desk and that women should have to ask for them. They expressed concern about mismanagement of products by other residents leading to shortages and intentional misuse.

Even though most women agreed that feminine hygiene products should be provided by shelter staff, we believe it is important they are readily available in all bathrooms to ensure privacy and to reduce the psychological impact that having to ask for basic needs like menstrual products can cause in these women, who are working to regain their independence. Access to these products is

more important than the possibility of misuse. If there is a consistent supply of menstrual products, we expect that over time, residents will become accustomed to having access and the impulse to hoard these products will be reduced.

Through this legislation we strongly believe the city will be contributing to gender equality and the empowerment of the sheltered menstruating population of New York City, which in turn will benefit society as a whole.

**Testimony for Elyse Greenblatt in regards to Int. No 1123**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Women's Issues Hearing**

**Scheduled for June 2, 2016**

Good morning, my name is Elyse Greenblatt. As part of our research we also found that though the most of the shelters we visited did provide free menstrual products in one way or another, the products offered by the shelters generally do not match the varying needs of the users. When asked about the provided products the women interviewed reported that these are usually very big, uncomfortable "un-winged" pads not suitable for everyone's cycle. Also none of the shelters provide tampons. For this reason, we found that only 4.8% of the women interviewed fully rely on the menstrual products provided by the shelters. The rest of the women, if possible, spend money from their limited budgets to purchase products that meet their needs.

Through our interviews we met a woman who told us that because of her heavy flow, the pads that are provided are not suitable. This means she must go out and purchase her own, despite being at a shelter that does provide menstrual products. We heard from many women who commented on the pads being uncomfortable and bulky and this was a major factor in their decision to purchase products outside of the shelter.

Due to this, we recommend shelters to provide better quality products and more variety to ensure these products meet the varying needs of the sheltered persons, and guarantee the shelters spend their money on products that would be actually be used by the shelter residents. This is very important because all people menstruate differently, and each day of the cycle is different, and as a consequence, needs vary from person to person and day to day. Moreover, not providing the

right products is also contributing to savings inequality in shelters, since people who are not menstruating do not have this extra expense thus allowing them to save more money.

**Testimony for Dafne Regenhardt in regards to Int. No 1123**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Women's Issues Hearing**

**Scheduled for June 2, 2016**

**Opening statement:**

Good morning everyone, my name is Dafne Regenhardt and I am a recently graduated alumna of the Graduate Program in International Affairs at the Milano School of The New School. My three colleagues and I have spent the last four months conducting research in shelters to assess women's needs, access and experiences in regards to menstruation and menstrual products. Through interviews we came to understand the extra hurdle of being a homeless woman in the city, and the monthly struggles of obtaining adequate menstrual products, as 51.7% of the women interviewed have faced lack of menstrual products and have had to go without at some stage.

There is an average of 60,000 people sleeping in shelters every night in New York City. Being homeless means having to face numerous challenges every day, but homeless people who menstruate face an added obstacle every month: having inconsistent access to menstrual products. Menstrual products are unaffordable for homeless people, and as a consequence, sheltered people who menstruate are unable to save as much as their non-menstruating counterparts.

Even though menstruation is a natural process, it could lead to numerous health issues if not adequately managed. The literature suggests links between poor menstrual hygiene and urinary or reproductive tract infections and other illnesses. Certain hygiene practices are more likely to

increase the risk of infection. For instance, some of the women we interviewed reported having to use toilet paper instead of tampons and rags instead of pads, which is a practice that can cause the growth of bacteria that could lead to infection. Moreover, some of these infections can increase the risk of other reproductive health problems. Ensuring good hygiene practices during menstruation is highly important, which, for homeless persons is directly related to the availability of menstrual hygiene products.

The lack of ability to afford or to obtain menstrual hygiene products has also great mental health impacts, which contributes to degradation of dignity. Not having access to these products leaves people feeling helpless, ashamed and vulnerable, which cycles them to depression. Adequate menstruation hygiene management is essential for people to engage in society with dignity and comfort. Quantitative and qualitative work has suggested a connection between poor MHM and school absenteeism, distraction, and disengagement. For instance, lack of menstrual products has limited 58.6% of the women we interviewed to participate in their regular activities.

Health and social research has identified poor Menstrual Hygiene Management as a critical development issue and an obstruction to achieving gender equality. Empowering the disenfranchised group of sheltered menstruating persons is not only vital for the impacted group but for the development of society and the economy as a whole.

**Testimony for Katarzyna Wrobel in regards to Int. No 1123**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Women's Issues Hearing**

**Scheduled for June 2, 2016**

Good morning, my name is Katarzyna Wrobel and I am part of the New School team researching access to menstrual products in NYC Shelters. We are here to discuss the findings and recommendations from our study, which included interviews with administrators and residents in shelters in 4 boroughs of the city.

In our research we found that there is inconsistency with how menstrual products are provided in NYC Shelters because every shelter has a different contract with the city and a different way to deal with menstrual hygiene products. The different approaches in the way shelters receive their supply of menstrual products include donations, including menstrual hygiene products as a budget item, and a combination of the two. Due to this, women are not sure what the process is at the shelter to which they are assigned, and when they move from shelter to shelter, their access changes. The women we spoke with told us about shelters where menstrual products are distributed once a week, and if you miss this distribution, you might be without products for your entire cycle. There are shelters that do not provide products at all, shelters that do expect women to ask for those products if they have any source of income, and shelters where women would have had access but were not informed of this access.

Based on our findings we recommend the standardization of the contracts between the city and the shelters in order to ensure menstrual products are consistently included as an item in all budgets, and that the shelters inform their residents about how to obtain products. This way, the

city will ensure non-discrimination and fair and equal access to these products instead of women's access being dependant on luck.



Testimony for Hearing on Intro 1122, 1123, 1128 and Resolution 1012  
Nathalie Interiano, Policy Associate  
June 2, 2016

My name is Nathalie Interiano and I am the policy associate at Care for the Homeless, the oldest and largest provider of health care services exclusively to individuals experiencing homelessness in New York City. We serve 8-10,000 people annually in 30 state-licensed and Federally Qualified Health Clinics in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. We also actively advocate for policies to fight, prevent and end homelessness.

We want to thank Chairman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, and all the members of the Women's Caucus and the Committee on Women's Issues for allowing us the opportunity to testify on this critically needed legislation, Intro 1122 and 1123, sponsored by Speaker Mark-Viverito and Chairman Ferreras-Copeland's Intro 1128, all addressing issues of access to feminine hygiene products to vulnerable populations throughout the city. We are proud to have been included in roundtable discussions with Councilmember Julissa Ferreras-Copeland's office last year, where NYC advocates from many social service agencies spoke passionately about the negative health, social and psychological impacts that the lack of feminine hygiene products causes throughout many communities in our city.

Hearing that girls regularly miss school, or that women resort to makeshift pad usage in prisons or shelters, sheds light on the many obstacles women face due to the lack of access to proper feminine hygiene and makes it impossible to ignore the urgency of the problem. Being able to maintain a hygiene routine is key to a person's own self-worth and value. As an organization serving homeless patients our clinicians have seen homeless women who face not only loss of dignity from lack of access, but health problems such as infections. For women experiencing homelessness, it can also mean minimal or no access to safe sanitary spaces, putting them in risky situations.

We as a roundtable also reflected on how this lack of access both caused and reinforced the stigma around menstruation. Having these conversations and increasing access is key to changing this culture. We as a city have an obligation to provide health care to all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable populations and this legislation is a considerable step in recognizing feminine hygiene as a basic health care need.

Advancing health care rights issues for underserved populations is a cornerstone of the work that Care for the Homeless does and we thank the distinguished City Council Members for fighting for these important pieces of legislation that will not only improve access to feminine hygiene products to many but also indicate a profound and important change in the way we view this issue.

We support this legislation because it is the right thing to do in order to advance the health care rights of all women.



NATIONAL  
INSTITUTE FOR  
REPRODUCTIVE  
HEALTH

**Testimony of the National Institute for Reproductive Health  
Campaign for a Pro-Choice New York  
before  
The New York City Council Committee on Women's Issues  
regarding  
Access to Menstrual Products in  
Corrections Facilities, Temporary Homeless Shelters and Schools  
Int. 1122, 1123, 1128  
June 2, 2016**

Thank you Chairwoman Cumbo and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak this morning. My name is Danielle Castaldi-Micca and I am the Director of Political and Government Affairs at the National Institute for Reproductive Health and our Campaign for a Pro-Choice New York. We work in New York State and across the country to ensure that every woman has the right and ability to make the reproductive health decisions that are best for her life and her family. This includes preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing safe, legal abortion. Women spend an average of three decades of their lives preventing pregnancy, which typically means they experience 30 years of menstruation. Menstruation happens monthly for an average of 3-5 days and can require up to 30 pads or tampons a month, or over 13,000 of these products over a lifetime.

We are thrilled that the New York State Legislature has voted to repeal the tax on pads, tampons and panty liners, and view that as a tremendously important step towards true economic equity for women. However removing that tax won't help the women and girls in most need: those living in poverty, in homeless shelters, and incarcerated. When incarcerated women and other people who experience menstruation do not have adequate access to menstrual products, it leads to makeshift solutions like wadded up toilet paper (often another precious commodity) and reusing pads. Besides being inhumane treatment, this can lead to poor hygiene and more serious medical issues like infections.

For homeless people who are menstruating there is a double frustration: public benefits do not cover menstrual supplies, and access to clean clothes, bathing and laundry when there is the inevitable mess is limited. Making menstrual supplies available in homeless shelters, in a non-stigmatizing way, will allow homeless women and other people who menstruate an important measure of cleanliness and hygiene, as well as the dignity that they deserve.

We have been proud to support Councilmember Ferreras in her efforts to provide no-cost menstrual supplies in schools across the city. For young people who come from low-income families, the risk of staining their school clothes is not only potentially embarrassing, but can lead to interruptions in education. This is something that we, as New Yorkers, should not stand for.

I want to thank the City Council and the Women's Issues Committee for taking on this important and so often ignored issue. The National Institute for Reproductive Health and its Campaign for a Pro-Choice New York support Ints. 1122, 1123, and 1128, and urge the Council to pass them, to ensure that all New Yorkers have fair and equal access to necessary menstrual products.

**TESTIMONY OF CARE FOR THE HOMELESS**  
**Before City Council Committee on Women's Issues, June 2, 2016**  
**By Simone Thompson, Shelter Director, Susan's Place**

My name is Simone Thompson. I am Shelter Director of Susan's Place, a 200-bed shelter for mentally ill and medically frail homeless women in the Bronx, operated by Care for the Homeless. I am here today testifying on behalf of Care for the Homeless.

In addition to operating our shelter, Care for the Homeless is the oldest and largest provider of health care services exclusively to homeless people of all ages in New York City. We serve 8-to-10,000 individuals annually in about 35,000 appointments at 30 state licensed and Federally Qualified Health Clinics in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. We also actively advocate for policies to fight, prevent and end homelessness.

We want thank Chairman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito, Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, and all the members of the Women's Caucus and the Committee on Women's Issues for the critically needed and important legislation you are discussing today. We are proud to have been involved in advocating for and supporting this issue for the last two years.

Speaker Mark Viverito's Intro 1122 and Intro 1123, along with Chairman Ferreras-Copeland's Intro 1128, require ready access to free feminine hygiene products in homeless shelters, correctional facilities and public schools. This is a dignity issue. This is a health care and hygiene issue. And this is a women's issue. Thank you all for your work to make this happen.

It's surprising to many people that this needs to be debated in 2016, but as a number of Care for the Homeless clients and staff have shared with Chairman Ferreras-Copeland and her staff over the last two years, it really is an issue. I'm pleased to report we have always made these products available at Susan's Place, but I've heard the stories from residents and other Care for the Homeless clients about the struggle women have had in some places in getting the supplies that should always been readily available in a dignified way to any women who needs them. It's unimaginable that in New York City in 2016 public facilities like homeless shelters serving a vulnerable population would make it difficult for women to get basic hygiene products, or make it embarrassing, or even in some cases simply fail to provide these necessities at all. Unfortunately, in some places, that is what has happened.

As you have been hearing, the failure to provide easy and free access is both an attack on basic human dignity and leads to unacceptable outcomes. Like health care, safe housing and food, this is a basic human right that should never be denied, never made difficult or embarrassing to access, and for the vulnerable populations that we serve, must never be dependent upon a woman's finances.

We also support Councilman Rodriguez's Resolution 1012, calling to end sales taxes on feminine products – which we understand has been adopted in Albany. These basic health and hygiene products

aren't a luxury, and they should be treated as other basic health care products are and be exempt from state and local sales taxes.

Thank you all for your work in addressing this basic but important issue and righting this wrong.



## TESTIMONY

The New York City Council

Committee on Women's Issues

Public Hearing on

Proposed Legislation: Int. No. 1122 - In relation to requiring that the department of correction issue feminine hygiene products to inmates immediately upon request

June 2, 2016

New York, New York

Prepared by:

Dori Lewis, Supervising Attorney, Prisoners' Rights Project

The Legal Aid Society

199 Water Street

New York, NY 10038

(212) 577-3530

Re: Intro. No. 1122-2016

The Prisoners' Rights Project of The Legal Aid Society submits testimony in support of the proposed revision to the administrative code of the City of New York, Amendment 9-141 of Chapter 1 of Title 9. We thank the Committee on Women's Issues for this opportunity and we applaud the Speaker and Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito and the bill's other sponsors for taking this important step in providing women in custody with a modicum of human dignity by addressing their fundamental right to be provided with feminine hygiene items as needed. We do, however, believe that in three significant aspects the proposed revision does not go far enough and make recommendations as to how it should be revised.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's oldest and largest provider of legal services to low-income families and individuals. From offices in all five boroughs, the Society annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in more than 300,000 legal matters involving civil, criminal, and juvenile rights issues. The Legal Aid Society Prisoners' Rights Project (PRP) has addressed problems in the New York City jails for more than 40 years. Through advocacy with the Department of Correction (DOC) and HHC, individual and class action lawsuits, PRP has sought to improve medical and mental health care and to reform the systems for oversight of the use of force and violence in the jails. Each week PRP receives and investigates numerous requests for assistance from individuals incarcerated in the City jails, their families, and their defense lawyers from the Criminal Defense Practice and elsewhere. Years of experience, including daily contact with incarcerated individuals and their families, has given the Legal Aid Society a firsthand view of problems in the New York City jails.

The goals of the proposed legislation are laudable. Women in DOC custody must have access to feminine hygiene items—tampons and sanitary napkins—upon request. These items are basic necessities, and are essential in order for women to meet women's core health needs and to provide them with fundamental dignity. However, we believe that the legislation does not go far enough in three respects.

First, we believe that women in custody should not have to ask for each and every tampon or sanitary napkin they need. Asking an officer—particularly a male officer—for such an item is embarrassing and opens the door to degrading comments by staff. To avoid that situation, up to three feminine hygiene items at a time should be provided to women. Such a requirement was recognized by the City over twenty-five years ago in the Consent Judgment entered in *Reynolds v. Stelaff*, 81-Civ.107 (S.D.N.Y. 1981) which set out provisions for women

prisoners confined in the Elmhurst Hospital jail psychiatric ward,<sup>1</sup> and there is no reason to take a step backward in 2016.

Second, we believe women should be able to choose whether to use a tampon or a sanitary napkin. Yet over the years women in DOC custody have often only been provided with sanitary napkins. We know of no legitimate rationale that should leave this decision to corrections officials, not to personal choice in how best to address an intimate body function.

Third, we believe that feminine hygiene items should never be withheld. The idea that they can pose a risk to security is almost laughable. Over the decades, far-reaching claims of threats to security have been made about such items, with claims ranging from a purported fear that women might somehow use sanitary napkins to engage in self-harm, to claims that they will be used to block the plumbing, and finally even to claims that they will be eaten or used as a commodity in the jails.

That access to feminine hygiene items should never be withheld has been recognized by the New York State Office of Mental Health even for acutely ill women in New York State prisons. For too long women in State custody held in mental observation cells were provided with feminine hygiene items only as “amenities” which could be withheld if they supposedly created a risk of harm to self or others. But in December, 2013 the Office of Mental Health, recognizing the importance of providing women with hygiene items while they are menstruating, clarified its policy so that the “risk of self-harm to women who are menstruating is mitigated by placing them on suicide watch. . .” and not by withholding sanitary napkins and underwear that hold the napkins in place.<sup>2</sup>

If, however, the Council believes that there must be an exception that allows a compelling security need to overcome the basic right of women to receive the necessary number or type of feminine hygiene item, then the proposed legislation correctly limits such restrictions to the moment in time when such a threat actually exists and requires that hygiene items be provided as soon as the threat abates. Beyond that, if there is indeed a compelling reason for withholding the hygiene item, then the basis for such a claim should be required to be documented by DOC, with the number and reasons for such restrictions provided to the Council at least twice per year, so that a strict review of the purported rationale for withholding these items can be conducted by the Council and the public.

We therefore believe that the proposed language of § 9-141 should be revised as follows, with additional language bracketed:

§ 9-141 Feminine hygiene products. All female inmates in the custody of the department shall be provided at facility expense with [[up to three]] feminine hygiene products immediately upon request. [[They shall be provided with sanitary napkins or tampons as they request. These requests shall not be denied or the number or type of hygiene items restricted]], unless so providing would substantially impact the safety or security of such inmate, in which case such

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reynolds v. Sielaff*, 81 Civ. 107 (S.D.N.Y), Stipulation and Order of Settlement, October 1, 1990 at ¶ 51 (“Inmate/patients in D11 shall receive up to three sanitary napkins at a time upon request unless clinically contraindicated as indicated in the inmate/patient’s chart”)

<sup>2</sup> See Attachment A, Letter from Catherine McDermott, Forensic Unit Chief to Dori Lewis, dated April 15, 2016.

items must be provided at the point such safety or security risk has abated. [[The reason for the denial or restriction, the number or type of hygiene times restricted, and the length of time such items were denied or restricted, must be documented. The Department shall provide a semiannual report to the Council setting forth the number of such denials or restrictions and the duration and justification for each.]] For purposes of this section, "feminine hygiene products" means tampons and sanitary napkins for use in connection with the menstrual cycle.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

# ATTACHMENT A



Central New York  
Psychiatric Center

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ANN MARIE T. SULLIVAN, M.D.  
Commissioner

DEBORAH J. MCCULLOCH  
Executive Director

April 15, 2016

Dori Lewis  
Attorney  
The Legal Aid Society  
199 Water Street  
New York, NY 10038

Re: Women in Observation Status

Dear Ms. Lewis,

We appreciate your concern regarding the care and dignity of women placed in Observation Status who are menstruating. We are very sensitive to women's issues and agree that women need underwear and feminine hygiene pads to preserve their dignity while menstruating.

A 12/11/13 clarification of CNYPC policy on this issue states: "...women housed in OBS will be provided with underwear and sanitary pads while menstruating. Should a woman be assessed to thus be at increased risk for using her underwear to self-injure, she should be placed on a 1:1 or 1:2 watch until such time as her menstruation period ends and she no longer requires the use of underwear and sanitary pads or her suicide risk is otherwise assessed to have abated."

There have been no instances since that date when it has been the case that a woman who is having her period was not allowed to have underwear to facilitate the use of feminine hygiene pads and minimize blood exposure to others.

To conclude, risk of self-harm to women who are menstruating is mitigated by placing them on a suicide watch, not by removing their underwear.

Catherine McDermott, PsyD  
Forensic Unit Chief

CNYPC CBO – Office of Mental Health  
Bedford Hills Correctional Facility  
247 Harris Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
(914) 241-3100 x 1210  
[Catherine.McDermott-Coffin@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Catherine.McDermott-Coffin@omh.ny.gov)

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A FACILITY OF THE OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH

P.O. Box 300, Marcy, NY 13403 | (315) 765-3500 | [omh.ny.gov](http://omh.ny.gov)

Testimony of the Children's Defense Fund – New York  
Before the Committee on Women's Issues

New York City Council  
June 2, 2016

Beth Powers  
Director of Youth Justice



Children's Defense Fund  
NEW YORK

**Children's Defense Fund – New York**  
15 Maiden Lane, Suite 1200 New York, NY 10038  
(212) 697-2323 [www.cdfny.org](http://www.cdfny.org)

The Children's Defense Fund's (CDF) Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life, and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. CDF-New York's unique approach to improving conditions for children combines research, public education, policy development, community organizing and statewide advocacy activities, making us an innovating leader for New York's children, particularly in the areas of health, education, early childhood and juvenile justice.

Thank you to Chair Cumbo and the members and staff of the City Council Committee on Women's Issues for this opportunity to testify. We wish to express support for Introductions 1122, 1123, 1128, and 1012 as well as highlight opportunities to further improve upon these initiatives aiming to make sanitary products more accessible across New York City.

### **Introduction 1122-2016**

CDF-NY acknowledges that the availability of adequate sanitary products has the potential to significantly impact the physical and mental health of those detained in and sentenced to NYC correctional facilities – a population that includes adolescents as young as 16 years old. Intro 1122 would require the Department of Correction (DOC) to “provide inmates with feminine hygiene products immediately upon request” and defines feminine hygiene products to mean, “tampons, sanitary napkins for use in connection with the menstrual cycle.” While we support Intro 1122, as the cost of providing sufficient and acceptable sanitary supplies is minimal when compared to the goal of protecting health and personal integrity, we believe the bill can be improved upon to clarify whether or how the “use” of tampons and sanitary napkins will be monitored to ensure “connection with the menstrual cycle” as well as the distribution of such products. We are concerned that the current language of the bill will invite a greater level of monitoring and supervision to the acquisition and use of hygiene products that may currently not exist and encourage strengthening the bill to ensure women have ample access to necessary products without scrutiny.

According to City Council, the DOC provides 144 sanitary napkins per week per 50 people and offers brand name napkins for commissary purchase.<sup>1</sup> The language of Intro 1122 includes both tampons and pads while publicly discussed DOC policy mentions pads alone. We support and encourage the introduction of tampons in NYC correctional facilities. Additionally, while prices for supplies in commissaries are prohibitive for those with minimal financial resources and outside support, matters of access become more complicated as those with outside support are not allowed to receive such supplies by mail. According to DOC's rules on delivering items to correctional facilities, toiletries are prohibited, and “must be purchased by the inmate in the commissary.”<sup>2</sup>

As the bill is written, feminine hygiene products shall be provided upon request “unless so providing would substantially impact the safety or security of such inmate.” We believe that corrections officers should not have authority to deny necessary hygiene supplies, however infrequently that may happen. Further, asking officers for items such as feminine hygiene products can be an uncomfortable situation given the power dynamic inherent to corrections settings. The dynamic is further complicated when considering that youth as young as age 16 are in NYC correctional facilities. Having products readily available or pro-actively provided can help alleviate this barrier. Given that a baseline of 144 sanitary napkins per 50 people each week may not always be appropriate given the difficulty in predicting the needs of the jail population, which is by nature inconsistent, we recommend that the bill require DOC to regularly assess that each unit has sufficient hygiene products, ensuring that individuals always have

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<sup>1</sup> Feeney, S.A. “Free the tampon’ movement gains steam with new legislation by council members.” *AM New York* 22 Mar. 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.amny.com/news/free-the-tampon-movement-gains-steam-with-new-legislation-by-council-members-1.11606445>. See also Rinkunas, S. “We're One Step Closer to Free Tampons and Pads in NYC Public Schools, Prisons, and Shelters.” *New York Magazine* 22 Mar. 2016. Retrieved from: <http://nymag.com/thecut/2016/03/new-york-city-bill-free-tampons-pads-in-public-schools-shelters-prisons.html>.

<sup>2</sup> New York City Department of Correction. “Deliver Permissible Items: Mailing Packages to Inmates.” Retrieved from: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/deliver-permissible-items.page>

easy access to such resources. Because the inadequate provision of hygiene products has been a documented trend in correctional settings across New York State and is considered a common problem faced by those in jail more generally,<sup>3</sup> we hope that the policy will not place the burden on the person to make the request, and that Intro 1122 can ensure DOC accountability to the basic needs of women.

### **Introduction 1123-2016**

This bill would require that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provide feminine hygiene products to all female residents in temporary shelters. Temporary shelters means Department of Homeless Services family shelters and single adult women shelters, Department of Youth and Community Development shelters, and Human Resources Administration domestic violence shelters. CDF-NY supports this initiative as it aims to ensure some of New York's most financially vulnerable women have full access to necessary feminine hygiene products.

### **Introduction 1128-2016**

CDF-NY believes that schools are uniquely suited to deliver a wide array of critically needed health supports. Schools capture an often hard-to-reach population and offer a safe, confidential space in which providers and students can engage in honest and meaningful conversations that promote healthy habits. Accordingly, schools are an obvious choice for providing barrier-free access to feminine hygiene products and CDF-NY supports Intro 1128-2016. In the school setting, students can access the products they need without cost or fear of stigma. The success of the pilot program which made feminine hygiene products available in certain schools in Queens further demonstrates that this bill will enable significant improvements across the five boroughs once implemented.

### **Introduction 1012-2016**

This resolution calls upon the Governor to sign legislation to make feminine hygiene products tax-exempt. The Children's Defense Fund – New York commends the City Council in their support of this state-wide concern.

### **Conclusion**

CDF-NY supports Intros 1122, 1123, 1128 and 1012 which improve upon the ways the city allocates sanitary products across these three unique settings. We thank the Women's Issues Committee for considering our comments and for lifting up this critical approach to ensuring improved access to menstrual products citywide.

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<sup>3</sup> Kraft-Stolar, T. (2015). *Reproductive Injustice: The State of Reproductive Health Care for Women in New York State Prisons*. New York, NY: Correctional Association of New York. Retrieved from <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Reproductive-Injustice-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-2-11-15.pdf>.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Sabella

Address: Food Bank For NYC

I represent: 39 Broadway, NY, NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1122etc Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Danielle Castaldi - Micca

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Nat'l Institute for Reproductive Health

Address: 470 Park Ave South

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1123 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Monica Lagano

Address: 680 Metropolitan Ave. Apt 3L Brooklyn, NY 11211

I represent: Graduate Research Team from The New School

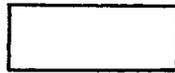
Address: 63 Fifth Ave. New York, NY

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CM 5 FC

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. All legislation Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sola Stamm

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New York lawyer For the Public interest

Address: 151 W. 30th St. 11th Fl NY

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simone Thompson

Address: 30 East 33rd Street, NY NY

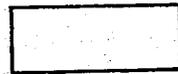
I represent: CARE for the Homeless

Address: 30 East 33rd Street

CM 5 FC  
Student  
Copied

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1128 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lineyah Mitchell

Address: 637 Glenmore Ave

I represent: Powerplay / Brooklyn Tech

Address: 42 Broadway

*n / student*  
*CM Ex. 10/07 - Campbell*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1128 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jo HAINES

Address: 42 BROADWAY NY NY 10004

I represent: POWERPLAY NYC

Address: 42 BDWAY

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Balkas Garcia

Address: 199 Water St, NYC 10038

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Appearance Card

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 in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Grace Mency (Congressmember)

Address: 4013 159th 11358

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Teniqua Kornegay

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DHS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Gendell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: (before noon if possible - we have a salary parity rally at noon - thanks!)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: June 2, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Azaoleh Khalili

Address: 253 Broadway, 4th Floor

I represent: Commission On Gender Equity / Mayor's office

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Judith Arroyo

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, L436, DC37

Address: (School Health - DOHMH)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Nieves

Address: 177 Livingston St., 7th Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201

I represent: Brooklyn Defender Services

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1122, 1123, 1128 Res. No. 1012

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nathalie Interiano

Address: 30 E 33rd St, New York, NY 10016

I represent: Care for the Homeless

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Warden Clifford

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Dept. of Correction

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd, East Elmhurst  
NY 11370

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1122, 1123, 1128 Res. No. 1012

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Elizabeth Adams

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Planned Parenthood of NYC

Address: 26 Bleecker St. NY, 10012

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1122, 1123, 1128 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Jennifer Weiss-Wolf

Address: 161 Ave of the Americas NY  
10013

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1123 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/2/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elyse Greenblatt

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Graduate Research team from The New School

Address: 63 Fifth Ave. New York, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1123 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6.2.2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katarzyna Wrobel

Address: 60-04 Putnam Ave #1 Ridgewood, NY 11385

I represent: Graduate Research Team from The New School

Address: 63 Fifth Ave New York, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1123 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 06/02/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAFNE REGENHARDT

Address: 186 Broadway, Brooklyn, 11211

I represent: GRADUATE RESEARCH TEAM FROM THE NEW SCHOOL

Address: 63 5th Avenue, New York

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alysee Jarmoszuk

Address: 72 Chambers St NY, NY 10007

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms