



Menstrual Equity



WHAT IS IT?

AUGUST 2023

Menstrual Equity is the affordability, accessibility and safety of menstrual products for all people, including laws and policies, that acknowledge and consider menstruation. **Period Poverty** is the limited or inadequate access to menstrual products or menstrual health education as a result of financial constraints or negative socio-cultural stigmas associated with menstruation.



WHY IT MATTERS

A 2021 U by Kotex® study revealed 2 in 5 people struggled to purchase period products, a 35% increase from the brand's initial research in 2018. The study also uncovered period poverty disproportionately impacts Black and Latina people, and that the COVID-19 pandemic further exasperated this public health issue.

- **Period supplies help students stay in school.** 1 in 4 US teens have missed class due to lack of access to period supplies. In Georgia, 51% of female students in grades 7 to 12 attend Title I schools (schools where children from low-income families make up at least 40% enrollment).
- **Where there is poverty, there is period poverty.** In Georgia, 1 in 6 women and girls between the ages 12 to 44 live below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). Almost 60% of families living in poverty experience financial distress and struggle to keep up with their bills and cover unexpected expenses.
- **Period supplies are a basic need.** 52,065 Georgia women participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program. Participants of government WIC and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) receive access to food, however SNAP benefits do not cover the cost of menstrual products, which explains why those living below FPL still face significant challenges meeting material basic necessities.

When young women and girls do not have access to period products, not only do they not feel protected, but it also puts their confidence, dignity and education at risk. They are less likely to be able to participate in their education, work and other activities, and if they are, they are likely to feel distracted and unable to focus on reaching their full potential.

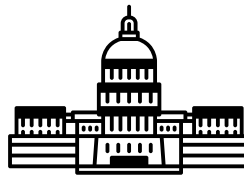


STATE LEVEL

Georgia is one of 21 states that still taxes menstrual products. The sales tax on menstrual products is unconstitutional based on the **Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment**. It's an issue of discrimination and inequity that can be solved with less than 0.01% effect on the state's budget.

Senate Bill 51 could have put an end to the 4% sales tax on menstrual products, as it has been proposed since 2018, but continues to stall. "The Republican majority did not allow a vote on the bill," says Senator Elena Parent, who co-sponsored SB51. SB51 still has a chance in next year's legislative session. On other fronts, some efforts have been made to assist with costs. Georgia was one of a few states that allocated money from their state budget for public health and public education to distribute period products to low-income women and girls. The **Georgia Department of Education** is funding schools that apply to put period products in their restrooms. Lawmakers are also increasing the amount for **Public Health departments** so they can distribute period products to homeless shelters and community support resources.

Although setting money aside is an admirable step, it **doesn't solve the issue of equity**. The state still levies a statewide tax on menstrual products. CVS Health has been paying the applicable sales tax on menstrual products since 2022 in states that still levy it, like Georgia.



FEDERAL LEVEL

In May of 2021, Rep. Grace Meng introduced the **Menstrual Equity For All Act of 2021** which would increase the availability and affordability of menstrual products with limited access and other purposes. She reintroduced it again in May of 2023. Meng has put much effort into improving access to menstrual products and promoting menstrual health.

The **Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act or the Dignity Act** requires federal correctional facilities to provide inmates with the basic healthcare necessities. That would include menstrual products, sanitary napkins, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and over the counter pain relievers. The bill also accommodates pregnant inmates and prisoners who are the primary caretaker parent.

The ACLU, a number of ACLU state affiliate offices, as well as the National Prison Project of the ACLU, have successfully fought for menstrual equity in many U.S. jurisdictions already — at local, municipal, state, and federal levels alike, and provide a comprehensive **Menstrual Equity Legislative Toolkit** providing key arguments and materials for advancing menstrual equity.



ADVOCACY

Want to get involved? Here are a few ways to support or get engaged with the movement:

Contact elected officials. Email, write, call, or visit with your elected officials. However, the most effective way is to meet face to face with your Senators, congressional representatives, or even their staff. Locate and call your legislators' offices to schedule an appointment. If you choose to email or write a letter, personalize it with information about the issue and how it directly affects you or your community. As you begin to advocate, you will eventually develop relationships with the staff in your representative's office laying the groundwork for effective change advocacy.

Remove access barriers. Set a goal and plan a period product collection drive or fundraiser to benefit local period supply banks like Atlanta GLOW. Period supplies are either rarely funded or underfunded in philanthropic and government budgets and so period supply banks often rely on public generosity and funding to provide these basic supplies directly to individuals in need.

Fight the stigma. Help reduce stigmas while bringing awareness to the issue of period poverty by confidently talking about periods in your every day conversations to help create a safe space where all menstruators can talk openly and fearlessly about periods and/or ask for the resources they need to menstruate with dignity.



RESOURCES

- <https://georgiastomp.org>
- <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org>
- <https://www.aclu.org/report/menstrual-equity>
- <https://georgiarecorder.com/2023/04/11/georgia-continues-charging-so-called-tampon-tax-despite-latest-legislative-repeal-effort/>
- <https://period.org/uploads/Global-Glossary-for-the-Menstrual-Movement-v1.3.pdf>
- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3614/text>
- <https://meng.house.gov/media-center/press-releases>

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