[DATE], 2024

The Honorable Anna Caballero

Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

California State Senate

State Capitol, Room 412

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 953 (Menjivar) – Period Equity Now Act of 2024 – (SUPPORT)**

**Dear Senator Caballero,**

On behalf of [organization’s name] I am writing in **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 953, which would represent a significant step forward in recognizing menstrual products as essential health items by incorporating them into the list of covered benefits under Medi-Cal. The bill directs the Department of Health Care Services to pursue the necessary federal waiver to facilitate the coverage for menstrual products under Medi-Cal.

[More about your organization and why your mission and goals align with SB 953]

According to a [July 2023 update](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/statistics/Documents/Medi-Cal-at-a-Glance-July2023.pdf) from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Medi-Cal serves more than 15 million low-income people in California. The program’s expansive reach, catering to predominantly Black and Brown low-income children, women, seniors, and those with disabilities, positions this as an ideal platform to provide comprehensive healthcare that acknowledges and responds to the unique requirements of its beneficiaries.

Period poverty continues to rise, especially among California’s most vulnerable communities. We must address this persistent and pressing issue. Recent surveys including the 2023 State of the Period Poll, reveal statistics with nearly a quarter of teenagers and one-third of adults still struggling to access necessary period products. In 2021 U by Kotex survey highlighted that a significant percentage of Black and Latinx menstruators faced challenges affording essential items for their menstrual cycle. The impact of limited access extends beyond financial problems because it has severe implications for the physical and mental well-being of menstruators. Because of a lack of accessible menstrual products, menstruators have resorted to using makeshift products, overusing products, or not using products at all. These practices lead to potential health risks such as skin chafing, disruption of vaginal flora, and even deadly health concerns such as Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Not only does period poverty have effects on physical health, but it also has vast effects on the mental health of menstruators. According to a study published in BioMed Central’s Women Health Journal, [Period Poverty & Mental Health](https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5), indications have shown that 14.2% of menstruators that experience period poverty were likely to report moderate to severe depression. Addressing period poverty isn't just about providing essential products for physical health; it's also a critical step in preventing mental health implications that arise from a lack of access to period products for all menstruators.

In 2023, [The Budget Act Supplemental Report](https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2023/4803/supplemental-report-2023.pdf) stated that by May 15th, 2024, DHCS must provide the California Legislature with a report on information and data about potential ways to apply for a federal Medicaid 1115 Waiver to reimburse the costs of period products, existing Medicaid 1115 waivers for period products in other states, options for California to submit a waiver for this program with the consideration of California’s children and adults, and a multiyear fiscal estimate for this new program. Once the full report is released in May, SB 953 would act as a vehicle for timely policy change to act on Medi-Cal beneficiaries' continued need for menstrual product access.

Senate Bill 953 presents a proactive solution to the persistent and health-threatening issue of period poverty. By mandating the Department of Health Care Services to seek federal waivers, the bill paves the way for extending coverage of menstrual products under Medi-Cal. This legislative approach aligns seamlessly with California's ongoing dedication to dismantling barriers and ensuring menstrual equity for all its residents.

**For these reasons, [organization’s name] supports SB 953 and urges you and the members of the Senate Appropriations Committee to support SB 953.**

Sincerely,

[Insert signature, name, title, affiliation]