

May 1, 2019

Congresswoman Grace Meng  
Statement to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Members' Day Hearing

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Titus and Ranking Member Meadows, and distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss H.R. 2403 – the Menstrual Hygiene Products in Federal Buildings Act and H.R. 1882 – the Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2019. Before I get to my legislation, I want to also thank this committee for your continued support of the critical issue of combatting aviation noise – an issue that is so important in my district of Queens.

As a founding member and former co-chair of the Quiet Skies Caucus, I have worked on numerous initiatives – many with your committee – to mitigate the deafening airplane noise that has plagued my district for way too long. I thank the committee staff and your leadership on these issues – and look forward to continuing this work, as I look to reintroduce legislation such as the Quiet Communities Act and the Airplane Noise Research and Mitigation Act.

I am here today to specifically discuss the issue of menstrual equity and the importance of accessing and affording feminine hygiene products. To note, the Menstrual Hygiene Products in Federal Buildings Act is a standalone measure of my larger comprehensive Menstrual Equity for All Act.

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Titus and Ranking Member Meadows, I know menstrual hygiene products is not the first thing that comes to mind when we say: “Transportation and Infrastructure.” But it IS a relevant issue – and an important one.

Access to safe, affordable menstrual hygiene products is a basic need and a health care right for 51 percent of the U.S. population. It is estimated that a woman will use up to 16,000 tampons in her lifetime, which equates to at least \$7,000 over the course of her life.

One might think these products are ubiquitous and cheap, but many women face difficulty when it comes to affording and accessing them. I know this because I have heard the heartbreaking testimonies from countless girls and women from across our nation. No girl – no one – should have to choose between their dignity or their education.

As a matter of fact, I am proud that since July 2018, all public schools in New York State provides free menstrual hygiene products.

In addition, just because someone is incarcerated or homeless they should not be deprived of their dignity. And no family should have to choose between buying these products or groceries.

To address the many hardships that different women and girls face in affording and accessing these products, my bill seeks to address this issue holistically.

Specifically, as it relates to this committee, and the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, H.R. 2403 and the relevant section of H.R. 1882 – would require all public federal buildings to provide free menstrual hygiene products in the restrooms.

The U.S. government is the largest employer in the country. It is estimated that there are 2.1 million federal civilian workers. This number does not even include the millions of contractors, grant employees, and others that make up our entire federal workforce. The issue of affordability and accessibility is everywhere. As we saw and heard during the recent partial government shutdown, there were countless federal employees and their families who were in desperate need of feminine products – such as pads and tampons, even diapers and formula.

It is time that our government finally walks the walk and sets an example by providing free menstrual hygiene products in all federal buildings. Doing so will help alleviate the real-life barriers in accessing and affording these everyday products – while normalizing this monthly necessity and basic human right.

Thank you again for this opportunity to come before your committee. I am especially grateful to the 7 members of this committee who have cosponsored H.R. 1882, including Chairwoman Titus. As Members of Congress, we should ensure that women and girls have access to safe, quality and affordable feminine hygiene products, however – and wherever – we can. Period.