

April 14, 2021

**Congresswoman Grace Meng (NY-6)**  
**Testimony to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**  
**Member's Day Hearing**

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, as well as distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss several issues that are under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am grateful for your leadership, inclusiveness, and hard work to help our country build back better.

I look forward to submitting for your committee's consideration infrastructure projects that are sure to improve the lives of my constituents in Queens. Some of the projects that will be at the top of my agenda include strengthening our reliance on alternative energy, including through electric vehicle charging stations.

I want to also thank this Committee for your continued support of combating aviation noise – an issue that is so important in my district. As a founding member and former co-chair of the Quiet Skies Caucus, I have worked on numerous initiatives – many with members of your committee – to mitigate the deafening airplane noise that has plagued my district for way too long. I thank you and your committee staff for being a tireless leader and partner on these issues – and look forward to continuing this work when I reintroduce the *Quiet Communities Act*.

Lastly, I am excited to discuss with you the issue of menstrual equity and its importance to our economic and social infrastructure. I know periods and menstrual products are not the first thing that come to mind when we say: "Transportation and Infrastructure." But it *is* a relevant issue – and an important one – especially during this unprecedented pandemic that has uprooted our economic and social balance. Access to safe, affordable menstrual 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.

Research has shown that lack of access to menstrual products can hinder a person's day to day life, making it difficult to attend school, go to work, secure job interviews, and pursue opportunities that could lead to economic advancement. That is why later this month, I will be reintroducing a comprehensive bill on this issue, the *Menstrual Equity for All Act*, which will address the hardships that different women and girls face in affording and accessing these products.

Specifically, as it relates to this committee, yesterday I introduced a standalone section from this comprehensive bill that addresses public buildings. The *Menstrual Products in Federal Buildings Act* would require all public federal buildings to provide free menstrual 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. We saw it during the longest government shutdown in history, and we have seen it throughout this pandemic. After all, periods do not wait for pandemics.

It is time that our government finally walks the walk and sets an example by providing free menstrual products in all public buildings – just as toilet paper, paper towels, and hand soap are already provided. Doing so will help alleviate the real-life barriers in accessing and affording these everyday products – while normalizing and destigmatizing this monthly necessity and basic human right.

Thank you again for this opportunity to come before your committee.