



• SAN FRANCISCO •  
WOMEN'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE

## Support for SB-953

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Senator Richard D. Roth  
Chair, Committee on Health  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **RE: SB-953; Amend section 14132 of the Welfare and Institutions Code to provide coverage of menstrual products**

Dear Senator Roth,

On behalf of the San Francisco Women's Political Committee (SFWPC), I am writing in strong support of SB-953, which will allow Medi-Cal to cover menstrual products.

SFWPC supports policies that safeguard and expand access to sexual and reproductive health care, including health care related to menstruation. Menstruation is a basic bodily function and a regular part of life, and yet, low-income individuals lack access to period products. Many federal and state assistance programs that are otherwise aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of low-income individuals prohibit the use of funds for personal hygiene items, including menstrual products. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (and by extension CalFresh) prohibit the use of funds for non-food items. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) cannot use funds for menstrual products.

Approximately 25% of teens and 30% of adults continue to struggle to afford period products, such as pads, tampons, and menstrual cups.<sup>1</sup> An individual experiencing "period poverty" may use period products longer than recommended, which increases the risk of developing toxic shock syndrome, skin irritation, or infection.<sup>2</sup> People experiencing period poverty are also more likely to have higher rates of depression,<sup>3</sup> which is no surprise given that personal hygiene is critical for bodily integrity and self-respect.

California has taken important steps in recent years to make period products more accessible. Recently enacted legislation requires public schools (grades 6-12) and colleges to provide free period products to students. However, these laws do not ensure access to free period products during non-school hours, school shutdowns, or school breaks – not to mention that the

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<sup>1</sup> THINX, Inc and PERIOD, *State of the Period* (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Hafiz Jaafar et al., *Period Poverty: A Neglected Public Health Issue*. *Korean J Fam Med*. 44(4):183-188 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.4082/kjfm.22.0206>.

<sup>3</sup> Lauren F. Cordoso et al., *Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States*. *BMC Women's Health* 21, 14 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5>.



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availability of period products may vary substantially by school and campus location.<sup>4</sup> California has also exempted period products from sales tax, but that still requires the purchase of period products.

SB-953 will improve upon existing law. Leveraging Medi-Cal to its full potential, SB-953 guarantees access to period products without financial barrier for menstruating low-income individuals. Further, providing this coverage through Medi-Cal offers California the opportunity to seek a Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) via a Section 1115 Waiver or State Plan Amendment. If granted, any costs associated with SB-953 could be offset substantially by the federal government, particularly if menstrual products are deemed a family planning service, which are provided a 90% FMAP.<sup>5</sup>

We urge you to pass SB-953. With SB-953, we can make sure that California ends period poverty once and for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DS' with a stylized flourish.

Davida Silverman  
Board Member and Policy Committee Co-Chair  
San Francisco Women's Political Committee

Cc: Senator Caroline Menjivar  
Senator Lena Gonzalez  
Senator Nancy Skinner  
Senator Scott Wiener

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<sup>4</sup> Itzel Luna, [Did California keep its promise to provide menstrual products on college campuses?](#), CalMatters (April 4, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Family planning services and supplies are not defined under Social Security Act § 1905(a)(4)(C), and the CMS State Medicaid Manual § 4270(B) provides states with broad discretion to define "family planning services" to include services that avoid pregnancy as well as services that prevent infertility. Healthy menstrual cycles are integral to fertility and family planning.