

Hello all,

We, students of the school district of Philadelphia, are extremely excited that funds have been allocated to providing free menstrual products to schools in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. However, as students, we believe our input can help improve the effectiveness of this initiative and make these products more accessible to everyone.

Currently, the district is considering wall-mounted dispensers as the primary means of distributing menstrual products to students. These dispensers are not only costly for the district, but often break down and will be difficult to maintain.

Additionally, the products placed in these dispensers by the district, one-size fits all pads and tampons are not helpful for a lot of students, as not everyone bleeds the same and a one-size fits all approach cannot accommodate every student's needs.

Speaking on behalf of all students in the Phila. School District, we want these products to serve everybody effectively. With this in mind, we have created a list of considerations for providing accessible and equitable menstrual products in Philadelphia schools. These considerations include:

- 1) Choose a company that suits students needs
 - The district should partner with a company that can provide students the products that they need, in ways that serve them. Students hope that the district will not partner with Aunt Flo, or another company that only provides emergency products. Students may be relying entirely on the products from their schools, and the chosen company should be able to provide products that make this possible.
- 2) Leaving product dispensers behind
 - Students would rather have period products stored in inexpensive containers, ideally bins or small cabinets. This is a far more reliable and effective way to distribute products to students, and reduces upkeep costs and leaves more funds available for the products themselves
 - Additionally, using basic containers is simpler than using dispensers, which would require environmental testing that could delay the desired early 2025 start date.
- 3) Implementing different sizes and product types
 - Every student has different needs. Products should vary in size, flow level, and product type, including both tampons and pads. If the district partners with Aunt Flo a variety of products should still be available in another capacity.

- The current products available are best for students with lighter flows. Adding a variety of sizes would allow for far more students to benefit from this initiative. These should be products that students can use throughout their day, including overnight.

4) Quality Products

- Currently, period products in schools are generally poor quality one-size-fits-all pads and tampons that use uncomfortable cardboard applicators. While we understand and support creating menstrual products intended to help the environment, a school bathroom is not the ideal place to launch this start-up. Many younger students are just becoming familiar with how to use these products. Forcing them to use a new product for the first time in school is not a comfortable or fair situation to put students in.
- The menstrual products that are widely available in stores, such as plastic-applicator tampons, are what would serve students best. These products also have a longer shelf life, as they are safely encased in single-use plastics rather than non-waterproof cardboard and paper.

5) As many as one needs

- Students should not be restricted to a certain amount of products at one time; students should be able to take as many as they need.

6) Clarity

- It should be made abundantly clear that all products are completely free of charge. This information should be made accessible in different locations and languages, including the primary languages spoken in Philadelphia (English, Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic). Signage with bold text and images in bathrooms would be an effective way to advertise this to students.

7) Student Voice

- Students should be heavily involved in this process. Input from students should be centered. This may include school-specific or school-associated clubs playing a large role in the decision making and outreach process.

8) Proper Education

- In an effort to ensure the health and safety of students, we encourage product storage containers or their vicinity to include information on anatomy and menstrual-health education.
- Brief instructions on how to properly use products, as well as what period blood can look like, should be available. Many pad and tampon boxes often include easy to understand images of how to use products. This is crucial for younger students who may be experiencing their first period in schools and aren't comfortable telling a nearby adult.

We are grateful to the School District of Philadelphia and Governor Shapiro's office for their effort to get menstrual products in Philadelphia high school bathrooms. This work is so important to the students of Philadelphia, and we appreciate that it is a priority of those in power. Thank you for taking our perspective into consideration, and we hope that the voices of Philadelphia students can continue to be a part of this conversation.

Sincerely,

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