

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 321

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

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Hearing Date: April 19, 2021 10:00 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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Kristen Herring

Austin N.O.W

Austin, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Kristen and I am providing comment FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 8 which is in Travis County in Austin. I didn't grow up in Austin or even Texas; I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago for most of my life. While we have our own issues, we ended period taxation in 2011. When I went to high school, there were free tampons and pads easily available in the women's bathrooms. This basic level of respect for girls and women was something I didn't realize was special to Illinois. It's not fun bleeding out of a vagina, if there is any way elected officials can make life easier for their constituents, they should do so and end taxation on period products. Whether you're a student, or live in poverty, those who aren't able to afford tampons/pads consistently have had to stuff their underwear with napkins or toilet paper. It's not our choice to experience menstruation. We shouldn't be forced to pay tax for a bodily function we have no control over. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I strongly urge to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,  
Kristen Herring

Gabrielle Evans

The Minority Sex Report, LLC

Houston, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Gabrielle Evans and I am providing comment FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 146, which is in Harris County, Houston, Texas. I have been advocate for menstrual equity for four years. In these years, I have donated to local organizations and shared various information social media. Through my community work, I have witnessed the need for menstrual products. Menstrual products are often overlooked because people are unaware of how a product so necessary can be so inaccessible to those who are the most vulnerable among us. Additionally, I have had personal experience with facing period poverty. I didn't know this term exist until recently. Sometimes there wasn't enough money, so I had to choose between buying menstrual products and sacrificing other needs. It wasn't my choice to experience menstruation. I shouldn't be forced to pay tax for a bodily function I have no control over. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code. Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I strongly urge to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Evans

Klaudia Forgacova

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Self - Operations Manager

Dallas, TX

My name is Klaudia Forgacova. I live in Dallas, TX and my zip code is 75204. I ask that this committee ensures that Representative Howard's House Bill 321 on removing the "tampon tax" gets passed and sent for a vote. This tax unfairly burdens those who must purchase period products, which are necessary healthcare items, not luxuries!

Additionally, forcing low-income menstruators to pay a tax on top of already expensive period products can be a very real barrier to purchasing these necessary products. This can restrict the movements and activities of menstruators for several days every month.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S. Let's add Texas to that list. Please ensure HB 321 gets approved! Thank you!

Ellissa Smith

Self

San Marcos, TX

It needs to be free for women as this is a basic human necessity

Carla Smith

Self

Austin, TX

Hygiene is a human right, and periods are not a luxury. They are a natural human function. Menstruating people need tampons, pads, liners, and menstrual cups to get by. It is absurd that these items, which are a necessity for millions of people, have a tax when products like Viagra do not. Please level the playing field and make women's NEEDS as important as men's WANTS.

Sruthin Ramaswamy

self

Austin, TX

It is wrong to tax something that is a necessity for menstruators

Mindi Weaver

self

FORT WORTH, TX

This is common sense. These are essential health items and should not be taxed!

Zuzana Polakova

I Support The Girls Austin

Austin, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony. My name is Zuzana Polakova and I am providing comments FOR HB 321. I live in in Austin, Travis County, TX House District 47.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

I am the Affiliate Director for I Support the Girls Austin, which is local affiliate of I Support The Girls, a registered 501(c)(3) organization in Silver Spring, MD.

I have been with this organization for over four years and I love serving my community. We collect and distributes essential items, including menstrual hygiene products, bras, and underwear, allowing women experiencing homelessness, impoverishment, or distress to stand tall with dignity.

Through my work with I Support The Girls Austin, I have witnessed the need to fight period poverty because the need to make menstrual products more accessible isn't going away anytime soon especially, during COVID-19. We have donated over 267,000 menstrual products in greater Austin area since 2017 and the need is great.

Eliminating the sales tax on menstrual products isn't going to solve period poverty but, it is going to alleviate some of the hardship for vulnerable communities to afford these products. Eliminating this tax will also help us buy more menstrual products to donate in our local communities. I witnessed a need and I decided to step up for my community. It is time for our legislators to do the same.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. I strongly urge to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,  
Zuzana Polakova

Neha Chelamkuri  
Code Crimson  
Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Neha Chelamkuri and I am a resident of Frisco, Texas. I am writing in support of HB 321 because necessary menstrual products are currently not tax-exempt in Texas, but are in 20 other states. A box of tampons (tax inclusive) costs between \$7 and \$9 while the minimum wage in Texas is \$7.25, and for many low-income women and teens, these hygiene products are often forgone for other necessities. While removing the tax is only a small difference with regards to one box or pack of products, the cost adds up over time, and especially when other products such as wound care supplies and sunscreen are exempt, it is a wonder that necessary menstrual products continue to be taxed. When so many are affected by this added cost, especially the increased number of women and children in poverty due to COVID-19, the ratification of this bill would positively impact Texas residents and their financial priorities. While there is much more work to be done to alleviate period poverty in Texas, this bill would put us one step closer to menstrual equity. As menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state's budget, I urge that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Neha Chelamkuri

Daniela Valle  
Self, designer  
Austin, TX

Just because us women deserve to have access to these expensive products. Products like viagra are exempt from tax, why wouldn't feminine products be tax free as well?

Sarah Berel-Harrop  
Self/seminarian

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Farmers Branch, TX

Please pass this bill out of committee. Women need hygiene products in their daily lives. The products already are expensive; adding sales tax just makes them harder to get. We should not be taxing necessities. Thank you for your consideration. And thanks to Rep Howard for this excellent bill.

Rabah Anwar

Code Crimson

Plano, TX

My name is Rabah Anwar and I live TX House District #. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Rabah Anwar

Uroosa Anwar

Self

Plano, TX

My name is Uroosa Anwar and I live TX House District #. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Uroosa Anwar

Anwar Sayeed

Self

Plano, TX

My name is Anwar Sayeed and I live TX House District #. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Anwar Sayeed

Hibah Anwar

Self

Plano, TX

My name is hibah Anwar and I live TX House District #. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Hibah Anwar

Ghazal Yadav  
Code Crimson  
Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Ghazal Yadav and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month. Moreover, over-the-counter products such as wound care supplies, medicines, or dietary supplements are tax-exempt, and period products are just as important, if not more. It does not make logical sense that around \$40 million dollars of the state's budget comes from a process that menstruators CANNOT CONTROL, and are almost being reprimanded for.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Ghazal Yadav

Chitresh Yadav  
Self  
Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Chitresh Yadav and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state's budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans' income every month. Moreover, over-the-counter products such as wound care supplies, medicines, or dietary supplements are tax-exempt, and period products are just as important, if not more. It does not make logical sense that around \$40 million dollars of the state's budget comes from a process that menstruators CANNOT CONTROL, and are almost being reprimanded for.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard's HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and our families shouldn't have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Chitresh Yadav

Poorvi Rathod

Self

Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Poorvi Rathod and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The "tampon tax" unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state's budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans' income every month. Moreover, over-the-counter products such as wound care supplies, medicines, or dietary supplements are tax-exempt, and period products are just as important, if not more. It does not make logical sense that around \$40 million dollars of the state's budget comes from a process that menstruators CANNOT CONTROL, and are almost being reprimanded for.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard's HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs support the most!

We shouldn't have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs!

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Poorvi Rathod

Tiy Jones

Menstrual Equity Organizations

Houston, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony. My name is Tiy Jones and I am providing comments FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 2, which is in Harris County/Houston.

I am the Owner and Founder of My Womb Wellness, which is a Social Enterprise, LLC in Houston TX.

I have been serving the Harris and Fort Bend County for 4 years on menstrual product knowledge and period care through my Womb Wellness "Got Periods" Annual 2K Walk. I have started a sponsorship program called "My Womb" that provides free organic period products to women and girls. I also have spoken throughout the community through platforms such as the American Caribbean Chambers of Commerce and the Black Gold Nation Organizations for this ongoing battle of period poverty in less fortunate cities in Houston. Women's and girl's periods are not going away and this will be a start to helping the community feel a relief of not having to worry about if they can afford their monthly menstrual necessity.

Through my work with My Womb Wellness, I have witnessed the need to fight period poverty because the need to make menstrual products more accessible isn't going away anytime soon especially, during COVID-19. At My Womb Wellness, I provide education on period problems and also always suggest organic period products to my clients. Organic menstrual pads and tampons should be included in this bill. In my one-on-one sessions, I consult my clients to switch to organic pads, why? "I had my second month experience a 5-day cycle and it's because I switched to organic pads as you recommended. Thank you so much." testimony from a client

Eliminating the sales tax on all menstrual products including organic products isn't going to solve period poverty but, it is going to alleviate some of the hardship for vulnerable communities to afford these products. Eliminating this tax will also help us buy more menstrual products to donate to our local communities. I witnessed a need and I decided to step up for my community. It is time for our legislators to do the same.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. I strongly urge to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,  
Tiy Jones

Dick Lavine

Every Texan (formerly the Center for Public Policy Priorities)

AUSTIN, TX

Every Texan supports HB 321.

Here is the list of health care supplies already exempted from the sales tax (Tax Code, sec. 151.313). Feminine hygiene products clearly fit into this category and should be exempted.

#### Health Care Supplies

This provision exempts sales of prescription and non-prescription drugs; corrective lenses and therapeutic devices prescribed by a doctor; insulin; hospital beds; hypodermic syringes or needles; braces; hearing aids; orthopedic, dental or prosthetic devices; blood glucose monitoring test strips; and certain devices used by people who are blind or deaf.

Mireya Trevino

self, program specialist

Austin, TX

have been advocate for menstrual equity in Texas for the past few years. In these years, I have coordinated menstrual product drives in my community to give menstrual products to folks in need on my college campus and surrounding community. Through

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM



my community work, I have witnessed the need for menstrual products. Menstrual products are often overlooked either because people are unaware of how a product so necessary can be so inaccessible to those who are the most vulnerable among us. It wasn't my choice, or anyone's, to experience menstruation. I shouldn't be forced to pay tax for a bodily function I have no control over. Being forced to pay a tax that Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code.

Lauryn Ott

Flo Code

Austin, TX

It is exhausting being a woman in this state. The least you could do is remove tampon tax so we can menstruate in peace and feel somewhat respected by the people we voted in (and can vote out) of office. We could use the remaining cents to add to our paychecks, which are already lower than a man's, to pay for things like groceries, pay off debt, gas, rent, etc. Plenty of other states and countries have abolished tampon tax so why isn't the "greatest state in the union" one of them? Use your power to actually help menstruating people and abolish this tax. Flo Code wouldn't exist and wouldn't be doing all of the work our government should be doing, if this wasn't a real issue. Think of your constituents.

Alison Landolt

Endometriosis Foundation of Houston

Pasadena, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments for HB 321. My name is Alison Landolt, and I live in TX House District 144 in Harris County.

I am the President of the Endometriosis Foundation of Houston, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to endometriosis awareness, education, and improving the quality of life of those affected by this disease. I submit comments on behalf of the 700,000 Texans suffering from endometriosis.

Endometriosis is one of the most common yet misunderstood diseases faced by women. It's often seen as just a gynecological disease, but the reality is that it affects every aspect of a woman's life. It does not kill us, but it steals our lives-- our careers, our vitality, our hopes of a family. All of that is replaced by anxiety, a feeling of being less than, and economic hardship from lost wages, the costs of failed treatments. It is a disease characterized by debilitating, painful, excessively heavy periods. You may think among all these things, the price of tampons is inconsequential, but you'd be wrong. Our needs for period products are more acute, and worrying about having our needs met turns into one stressor on top of another. For us, tampons and pads are not a luxury; they are a critical form of hygiene and a medical necessity. Yet Texas, with its draconian tampon tax, seems to disagree.

I am 1 in 10 women of reproductive age suffering from endometriosis. Growing up, I was 1 in 4 menstruators who struggled to afford menstrual hygiene products. The intersection of these two statistics is a source of great despair. A younger, impoverished, undiagnosed version of myself would wonder, how long can I go before I bleed through my clothes? How long can I stretch this tampon or pad? Can I make it an hour? Can I make it two hours today? What will it take so I don't end up in a pool of blood this time? I could not afford to change my pads as often as necessary, and I could not afford to go without changing them.

I wish I could say I were alone in this dilemma, but my experience as an endometriosis advocate informs me otherwise. We represent an especially vulnerable section of the population experiencing period poverty. I know eliminating the sales tax on menstrual products will not outright solve this, but it will alleviate some of the burden on vulnerable communities like mine.

Some people may think a period tax is an inconsequential thing to take up so much space, but I thank you for allowing us to do so today. The reality is that we live in a society that doesn't like for menstruation to take up any space. The period stigma makes menstruation a taboo topic. Without these open conversations about period health or solutions to period poverty we reinforce that stigma, making it harder for people like me to access the resources we need.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Endometriosis is taxing enough. It's time to end the tampon tax now.

Thank you,  
Alison Landolt

Katherine McKay, Ms.  
Self, Unemployed, Full Time Student  
Baytown, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Katherine McKay, and I am providing comment FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 128, in Baytown, TX.

During this legislative session, I have advocated in SUPPORT of HB 321 through emails, tweets, and phone calls. This tax discriminates against all menstruators in Texas, and disproportionately affects poor menstruators. As a menstruator myself, I am forced to purchase products that are unfairly taxed out of necessity for my health. I have needed these products for over a decade and will continue to need these products for decades to come. For my fellow Texans who may not have the same economic privilege I have, this tax becomes an economic burden, compounding poverty.

I did not choose to experience menstruation. I should not be forced to pay tax for a bodily function I have no control over. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I strongly urge you to vote HB 321 out of committee soon. By getting rid of this tax on period products, Texas would set an example for other states to follow. There is no better time to make this change than now.

Sincerely,  
Katherine McKay

Sophia Pirani  
Self- Student  
Sugar Land, TX

I believe there should not be a Tampon Tax. It's unfair for the women across the state who need to regularly use tampons. It's an everyday product women should be able to use without paying extra. It's a part of who we are and it's unjust to continue to impose a tax on a basic necessity.

Vishal Gopalakrishnan  
Self  
Richmond, TX

I am in support of the bill because feminine hygiene products are necessities and should be considered as such. Taxing them as luxury items when they are necessary healthcare items is unjust and causes great harm to those that can't afford the products when they have a luxury tax on them.

Meghana Anam  
Code Crimson  
Frisco, TX

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Meghana Anam and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a member of Code Crimson and a supporter of the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

For context on why this bill is so important, period poverty is when menstruators cannot afford or access menstrual hygiene products such as pads and tampons. Currently, these products are taxed as if they are luxury items, when in fact they are necessary healthcare products. The “tampon tax” unfairly burdens Texans in period poverty and prevents them from taking care of other financial priorities.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S.; however, Texas is not one of these states. Menstrual hygiene products occupy only 0.03% of the state’s budget, yet the tax puts a very real burden on many Texans’ income every month.

Especially in the time of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supporting the removal of the tampon tax through Rep. Howard’s HB 321 can provide some relief for constituents who are already suffering from the ongoing health crisis (many already having to go without health insurance). It is times like these when our community needs you the most and we shouldn’t have to worry about paying extra for our menstrual healthcare needs.

My personal experience with Code Crimson and the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition during the pandemic has revealed to me that menstruation is a multi-faceted issue. I have personally worked with menstruators who feel ashamed by the thought of having a uterus and would like any sort of relief, whether it be financially or economically, from the burdens of menstruation. With your help, we can work towards a better future for menstruators and improve the current healthcare conditions in Texas.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Meghana Anam

Nikita Shrestha  
Utd Period Project  
Round Rock, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,  
Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Nikita Shrestha and I am providing comment for HB 321. I live in TX House District 136 which is in Round Rock/Williamson County.

While I do not speak from my own personal experience of period poverty, through my work in advocating for menstrual equity on my college campus I have met and seen many other people my age who are struggling with the issue. My school’s organization is called, UTD Period Project and I am a part of our marketing team. In coordinating and advertising fundraisers to raise money and menstrual products I have seen the people it has helped dramatically improve their period. In helping them out in this aspect, they were able to participate in school and classes more comfortably. Periods should not be a barrier to a safe and sanitary education. And yet, when we tax these menstrual products, we make life immensely harder for women and menstruators in poverty. Having to choose between meals and a pad or your education and a tampon is not a fair choice. Allowing these people to not only suffer the indignity of poverty but also, the indignity of not being able to have a sanitary and safe period is something I can’t comfortably allow to continue.

As a college student you learn about many injustices in the world, however as a woman and menstruator myself, learning that this archaic tax still existed, upset me. The injustice of period poverty is an incredibly gendered issue. It closes the doors for many women, impeding their education or even stopping them from getting jobs. This pandemic has shown us the intense need to end the tax to support these women and other menstruators. I hope I can emphasize that this is an intersectional issue that affects so many of your district’s constituents living in poverty especially the women of color who are disproportionately affected.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

It wasn't my choice to experience menstruation. I shouldn't be forced to pay tax for a bodily function I have no control over. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I strongly urge to vote in support of HB 321!

Teresa Robles Saldivar  
self - daycare provider

Brownsville, TX

Please support HB321 Stop the unfair practice of taxing women for having periods.

Heather Allison  
Jane's Due Process  
Austin, TX

I am writing on behalf of Jane's Due Process to express our strong support for HB 321, which would exempt menstrual products from the state sales tax. This bill promotes menstrual equity, which is essential to both reproductive justice and gender equality.

Jane's Due Process is a nonprofit organization that helps teens in Texas confidentially access reproductive health services. Through our confidential hotline and textline, we provide support to teens seeking contraception and other reproductive health services. Our work has shown us that access to essential products and services is always the most difficult for the most vulnerable populations; for that reason, policies that promote menstrual equity are integral to the health and safety for Texas teens.

Menstrual equity is an issue affecting the most marginalized populations. People living in poverty and people experiencing homelessness are most affected by lack of access to menstrual products. This lack of access can lead to people reusing products, using products for longer than indicated, or not using any products at all, which can have medical and psychological consequences. People who lack access to menstrual products are also more likely to have difficulty attending school or work or have the appearance of being unprofessional or unhygienic, which can have negative societal effects and perpetuate stigma and marginalization.

Lack of access to menstrual products is also a serious public health concern, and can lead to infections that increase susceptibility to cervical cancer or infertility. Eliminating the sales tax can have a real impact on the health of vulnerable communities with little cost.

Removing the sales tax on menstrual products is in the best interest of gender equality. Necessary items are often exempted from state sales taxes, and menstrual products are absolutely necessary. Menstruation is a natural monthly occurrence that over half the population experiences; menstrual products should therefore be as available and accessible as toilet paper or paper towels. Restricting access to menstrual products is a form of sex-based discrimination disproportionately affecting women, trans men, and nonbinary people.

For the reasons stated above, and in the interest of reproductive justice, we strongly support HB 321 and the advancement of menstrual equity.

Karen Collins  
Self retired  
Austin, TX

I support HB321 and ask you to do the same. It is barbaric to tax products that girls and women must have to live normal lives. My mother and aunts had to stay home during menstrual periods because the only thing they had were rags. ALL girls and women need these products and they should not be taxed. Please support HB321 and I salute Representative Howard for her courage.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Sterling Shearer

self

Austin, TX

Menstruation is not a choice and people who do deserve to not have to pay a surplus of money every month for the “privilege” of using medical hygiene products.

Drea Dennison

austin high

austin, TX

Feminine products should be exempt from the tax because menstration is not a choice.

Sophie Webster, Student

Austin High School

Austin, TX

Women NEED to have better access to feminine products. Please please consider the women in your lives and how this affects them.

William Schaefer

Self, architect

Austin, TX

Taxing feminine hygiene products represents an unfair burden on women who have little or no choice in whether they use them. This bill is long overdue, thank you!

Patrick Platter, RN

Self, Registered Nurse

Houston, TX

I ask that the committee votes YES on Representative Howard’s House Bill 321 on removing the “tampon tax.”

This tax unfairly burdens those who must purchase period products, which are necessary healthcare items!

As a nurse, I see everyday the tragic negative effects of having healthcare that is too expensive for Texans to afford.

Additionally, forcing low-income people to pay a tax on top of already expensive period products can be a very real barrier to purchasing these necessary products.

This can restrict their movements and activities, basic freedoms we should all have, for several days every month.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S. Let’s add Texas to that list. Please vote YES on HB 321! Thank you.

Andrea Reyes

Deeds Not Words / self, Political Director

Austin, TX

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

I am in favor of HB 321.

Those who menstruate are being unnecessarily punished for something that is natural. How is it possible that currently in the first-world some people are faced with choosing between paying for a hygiene product and paying for a meal. How is it possible that an essential item like a tampon, pad, or diva cup is taxed when non-essentials like rogaïne and viagra are not.

Menstrual cycles are not luxurious or fun, and should not have a luxury tax associated with it, Menstrual cycles are not just a female issue and menstruation is not cheap. We need to stop taxing mother nature, and eliminate the Tampon Tax.

Abena Boateng

Self

Sugar Land, TX

Being able to not have to pay taxes on something very necessary to feminine care would be the right thing to do. Citizens already pay so many taxes and other items that having a tax on feminine products is a little bit tone deaf and unnecessary. These products are already expensive as it and many low income women cannot get the items that they do need.

Alexander Montalvo

self, consultant

Fort Worth, TX

I live in Fort Worth, TX and my zip code is 76116. I ask that you vote YES on Representative Howard's House Bill 321 on removing the "tampon tax." This tax unfairly burdens those who must purchase period products, which are necessary healthcare items, not luxuries!

Additionally, forcing low-income menstruators to pay a tax on top of already expensive period products can be a very real barrier to purchasing these necessary products. This can restrict the movements and activities of menstruators for several days every month.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S. Let's add Texas to that list. Please vote YES on HB 321! Thank you.

Lindsay Speed

SELF

Kyle, TX

I believe this is a good bill. We should not be charged tax on items that are "medically necessary" in order to maintain proper hygiene.

Corinna Archer

Self

AUSTIN, TX

I strongly support HB 321 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill to create more affordable access to period products for Texas women. Women should never have to chose between spending money on period products for themselves and diapers, food, or medicine for their children and family. Unfortunately, this is too often the case for women living in poverty. Please support HB 321 to create more equitable access and affordability for these essential products, and make it easier for businesses to provide them affordably for their employees and customers. Thank you for standing up for Texas women and our health needs.

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Laura Perez  
self - architect  
Austin, TX

Hygiene is a human right. Tampons are not a luxury item they are a necessary good for every female.

Anum Khan  
self, student  
Frisco, TX

I think the House should pass HB 321, the bill relating to tax exemption of feminine hygiene products.

I believe HB 321 is an important step towards ending period poverty and ensuring menstrual equity. Many states—like New York, California, Colorado, and Nevada—have exempt the tax on feminine hygiene products and seen numerous benefits. Studies from Richmond Scholarship have shown that ending the tax on feminine hygiene products would aid women because it gets rid of the unfair tax burden and makes feminine hygiene products more accessible to low income women.

A study by Harris Insights & Analytics found that one in five teenage girls can't afford to purchase feminine hygiene products, and 1 in 4 girls have missed school because they didn't have access to tampons or pads. As a student, this bill directly effects me. My classmates and I should be able to go to school and get a proper education without having to worry about the high cost of feminine hygiene products due to the tax. A state representative's job is to advocate for the people. This includes students. Please take the right step towards helping my peers and I.

Sadhvika Challa  
TXMECoalition  
Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Sadhvikha Challa and I am providing comment FOR HB 321.

I have been an advocate for menstrual equity for 3 years. In these years, I have coordinated menstrual product drives in my community to give menstrual products to my local food bank/homeless shelter/school/etc. Through my community work, I have witnessed the need for menstrual products. Menstrual products are often overlooked either because people are unaware of how a product so necessary can be so inaccessible to those who are the most vulnerable among us.

It wasn't my choice to experience menstruation. I shouldn't be forced to pay tax for a bodily function I have no control over. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment. I strongly urge you to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

Laurel Hays, Dr.  
self  
Houston, TX

Tampons and other feminine hygiene products are absolute necessity for women in work, at play, etc. Feminine hygiene products are not a luxury, and should not be taxed as such. As for food and medicine, tampons should not be taxed. Women should not be penalized for their sex.

Mireya Garcia

2004

Harlingen, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public commentary. My name is Mireya Garcia, and I am from the Rio Grande Valley.

Today, I am writing to you all to voice my support for HB 321. This bill would eliminate a tax on menstrual products, a product that is necessary for people with periods. This tax on menstrual and sanitary disproportionately impacts women and transgender people who have periods. For many, this tax is a hindrance to being able to access essential sanitary products like pads and tampons. If Texas aims to be a leader in women's issues and gender equity, passing HB 321 would be a major step in doing so.

Heidi Kahle

Self; Policy Advisor for City Council Member

Austin, TX

My name is Heidi Kahle, and I am representing myself. Today, I am writing in support of HB 321. A sales and tax use exemption for certain feminine hygiene products would both (1) remove a massive burden on taxpayers (2) increase the affordability of essential period products. Given the basic necessity of feminine hygiene products, they should be classified along other similar essential goods that are not taxed, such as groceries and OTC and prescription medications. A 2019 study found that 1 in 5 teens could not afford period products, and 1 in 4 have missed class because they did not have access to pads or tampons: in other words, when people can't afford period products, they often cannot fully participate in their education and economic lives. Please consider passing HB 321 to remove this punitive burden on taxpayers and promote the right and ability of nearly half the population to fully participate in their economic lives and education. Thank you.

Georgia Keysor, Ms.

Self - Retired

Austin, TX

I am asking you to vote YES on Representative Howard's House Bill 321 on removing the "tampon tax." This tax unfairly burdens those who must purchase period products, which are necessary healthcare items, not luxuries! Additionally, forcing low-income menstruators to pay a tax on top of already expensive period products can be a very real barrier to purchasing these necessary products. This can restrict the movements and activities of menstruators for several days every month.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S. Let's add Texas to that list. Please vote YES on HB 321! Thank you.

Amy Branch-Lambert

self - self-employed

Grapevine, TX

My name is Amy Branch-Lambert I live in Grapevine and my zip code is 76051. I ask that our Representatives votes YES on Representative Howard's House Bill 321 on removing the "tampon tax." This tax unfairly burdens those who must purchase period products, which are necessary healthcare items, not luxuries!

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM



Additionally, forcing low-income menstruators to pay a tax on top of already expensive period products can be a very real barrier to purchasing these necessary products. This can restrict the movements and activities of menstruators for several days every month.

Luxury tax exemptions on period products have been mandated in 20 states in the U.S. Let's add Texas to that list. Please vote YES on HB 321! Thank you.

Margaret McEwen

Self

Plano, TX

No personal hygiene product should have any tax associated with the purchase of such product. This is as necessary as food.

Srinivasa Anam

Self, Software Engineer

Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Srinivasa Anam and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a supporter of Code Crimson and the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

I have a daughter who is greatly involved in this issue through her work at menstrual equity organizations Code Crimson and Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition. Supporting Howard's HB 321 means supporting my daughter and the thousands of other menstruators in Texas looking to support Texans in period poverty.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Srinivasa Anam

Nandini Anam

Self, Homemaker

Frisco, TX

Dear Chairman Morgan Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Shawn Thierry, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Nandini Anam and I live TX House District #33. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. As a supporter of Code Crimson and the Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 321.

I have a daughter who is greatly involved in this issue through her work at menstrual equity organizations Code Crimson and Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition. Supporting Howard's HB 321 means supporting my daughter and the thousands of other menstruators in Texas looking to support Texans in period poverty.

I request that you please vote this out of committee as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a public comment.

Sincerely,  
Nandini Anam

Sahar Punjwani

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition

Sugar Land, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. My name is Sahar Punjwani and I am providing comment FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 26, which is in Fort Bend County in Sugar Land, Texas.

I first learned about the sales tax on menstrual products when I was a junior in high school. As I learned more and did more research, I was impacted by how a sales tax on menstrual products is directly tied to the stigma surrounding menstruation. It was never questioned why menstrual products, a basic medical necessity, were taxed. No one wanted to talk about that. Moreover, young girls are used to having periods in silence, hiding pads and tampons under their shirt to go to the bathroom or whispering to a friend about how she needs an extra pad. At school, I founded a club called Girl Up, and one of our projects was to discuss periods with the 7th grade girls at our school. When we went into classrooms and asked the girls about periods, they were extremely shy. They giggled, whispered to each other, and looked away but didn't answer my questions. I was deeply struck by the level of stigmatization and internal embarrassment that continues to permeate young girls in schools today surrounding periods. This is directly connected to my activism to end the tampon tax in Texas, as I believe that passing this bill will not only make menstrual products more affordable for families, it will also jumpstart a larger conversation on menstrual products – why is it that pads and tampons have a sales tax on them? How is it decided if an item gets a sales tax or not? Women's Health should not be taboo, and menstruation is a part of that. I believe that getting rid of the tampon tax in Texas is an important step in having larger conversations about periods in the government and just in public as well. I don't want to see more 7th grade girls too ashamed to talk about their own bodies and too nervous to ask questions about periods in front of their friends.

Menstruation is a natural bodily process that is key to overall health. No one should be ashamed to talk about their own bodies. No one should be taxed for something that happens within their bodies. Menstrual products are a medical necessity and should be treated as such in the state's tax code – medical products without taxation.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. I strongly urge to vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,  
Sahar Punjwani  
Texas Menstrual Equity Coalition Organizer

Derrick Tse  
Derrick Tse  
Sugar Land, TX

Emily Blanco  
Self  
Dallas, TX

Being a woman has many pros but in a society like today, seems like there are more cons. I love my body and the beauty it has to create life. They way it cleans itself every month and prepares for a baby to be conceived. Well, right now I am in college and am not ready to have a baby, meaning I deal with "period" or my menstrual cycle once a month. It is expensive buying feminine products each month... it is a necessary expense that men are blessed to not have to deal with themselves. Feminine products are already expensive as they come and having a tax makes it more difficult. Though it is very little money at the moment, it adds up each time. Though women are not the only ones effected by it, men too have to buy them for the daughters, wives etc. Food is a necessity which is why there is no tax on it. So why not remove the tax for feminine products which is also a necessity?

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

Hannah Sheard

Self

Hallsville, TX

Tampons, pads, and other feminine hygiene products are NOT luxury items. These are basic essentials that women everywhere use. These items are a necessity.

Hannah Hall, Ms.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

As someone who has menstruated for over a decade now and is a young, cisgendered woman, I find taxing items essential to my personal health to be discriminatory and misogynistic. Given that other sexual health products, especially for men, are not taxed like feminine hygiene products, I see no reason why the sales of these items should be any different. People should not have to choose between their health and financial wellbeing due to additional taxes on such important items to any individual that menstruates.

Laura Lee Daigle

Austin Diaper Bank

Austin, TX

My name is Laura Lee Daigle, and I am on the board of directors at the Austin Diaper Bank. I am strongly for HB321. The Austin Diaper Bank provides period supplies to women experiencing poverty, most often young school aged girls. An estimated 40% of the teenagers targeted by our new program report missing school or work due to lack of period supplies – twice as high as the national average of one in five teens. Period supplies are school supplies and are essential products, not luxury items. Please vote in favor of HB321, acknowledging the fact that period supplies are necessities of life. Thank you!

Marin Hart

self, menstrual equity advocate

Houston, TX

Dear Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairwoman Thierry, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. I'm Marin Hart, and I am providing comment FOR HB 321. I live in TX House District 146, which is in Houston.

When I was 13, I became aware of period poverty and organized my first drive for a local women's shelter. In high school, I served as co-advocacy director for what's now The Period Pact in Houston. In that role, I led workshops on sustainable menstrual products, provided testimony for the HISD school board, and created educational content about menstruation. Currently, I'm working to bring free menstrual cups to students on my college campus. Through all of this work, I have seen the positive impact of having conversations about menstrual equity and stigma, and I'm grateful that conversation has extended to the legislative level.

I have also seen the intense need for menstrual products, from homeless menstruators to students. I recently spoke with a local middle school's nurse about the endless demand for menstrual products from students. It was clear that some students rely on the nurse's supply. Those students deserve to be able to focus on their education, not their bodily needs. Removing the tax on menstrual products is the first step to making them more accessible to students like hers. These products are a medical necessity, and should be treated as such in the tax code.

Thank you for the opportunity to publicly support this bill. It will do so much good for the menstruators of Texas. I urge you to

Printed on: April 19, 2021 9:44 PM

vote HB 321 out of committee soon.

Sincerely,

Marin Hart