



Massachusetts – National Organization for Women Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2019

Legislative Briefing to be Held on Menstrual Access Bill

Leading feminist organization Mass NOW holds briefing on bill that will make menstrual products free and accessible in public schools, prisons, and shelters.

Boston, MA (September 30, 2019) — Following the September 24th hearing by the Joint Committee on Public Health, the Massachusetts chapter of the National Organization for Women (Mass NOW) will host a legislative briefing on the I AM bill (HD2272/SD1381) on **Thursday October 3rd from 2:00 - 3:30pm at the Massachusetts State House in room 437.**

The 'I AM bill' would require Massachusetts public schools serving students in grades 6 to 12, prisons, and homeless shelters to provide free, easily accessible menstrual products. The bill also contains language to ensure the products are truly accessible without stigmatizing the individual seeking them. The bill has over 70 co-sponsors and was co-written by Mass NOW and the offices of its lead sponsors Representative Jay Livingstone, Representative Christine Barber & Senator Pat Jehlen. According to Senator Jehlen, "In my district, student organizers have led the way to change; it's impressive to see the progress made in understanding the issue and in community-based policy they have effected. And the hearing showed us that such change is being sought across the state."

"We are excited to bring the issues surrounding menstrual product access to the State House and to hear people discussing this often taboo subject in the halls," says Mass NOW president Sasha Goodfriend. Tuesday's hearing included testimony from the bill's sponsors as well as experts in the menstrual equity movement, including Goodfriend, Kate Sanetra-Butler, the founder and Executive Director of Dignity Matters, Diya Khuller, a student at Northeastern who passed similar policy at her high school and university, and Kimberly Blair, a Rappaport Fellow in Representative Livingstone's office.

Thursday's briefing will give organizers another opportunity to educate legislators and their staff about the importance of access to free menstrual products. "We recently completed a State of Menstrual Access survey involving school nurses, shelter workers and department of corrections staff," says Goodfriend. "Over half of the nurses we heard from said they had seen students missing class because they didn't have a menstrual products. 25% of shelters don't provide menstrual products at all, and for those that do, more than half rely on donated supplies." continued Goodfriend.

The 4th floor of the State House is currently hosting a Period Pop Up Art Show on display from 8:00am - 6:00pm until October 6th. The art show features work by over a dozen artists from around the Commonwealth. Viewers are invited to celebrate, reclaim, explore and question periods, menstruation and the theme 'the personal is political.' Lead sponsor Representative Barber says "I am glad to partner with Mass NOW on sponsoring the art show and legislative briefing this week. Both events are an opportunity to learn about why menstrual equity is important, as well as to bring awareness to our bill to provide free products in public schools, prisons, and shelters."



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Mass NOW is also partnering with PERIOD.org to host the first ever Massachusetts rally for National Period Day on October 19th 3:00pm at City Hall Plaza. The event is expected to be the largest of similar rallies being organized in all 50 states. Currently, 35 states in the US still have a sales tax on period products considering them luxury items. Members of the Menstrual Movement believe that it is a fundamental human right to have access to menstrual hygiene. They are calling for two major actions: for clean and healthy period products to be freely accessible in schools, shelters, and prisons, and for the elimination of the “tampon tax” (sales tax on menstrual products).

If passed, the ‘I AM bill’ would be the first statewide law of its kind in the country, making Massachusetts a leader in the growing menstrual equity movement.

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About Mass NOW: *Since 1968 Mass NOW has been advancing intersectional justice and feminist principles in the Commonwealth. Today, Mass NOW is still one of the leading multi-issue, multi-strategy feminist organizations in the Commonwealth. Mass NOW is currently a 100% volunteer board-led grassroots organization that thrives on the support of members, supporters, and allies. Made up of three distinct branches, the Mass NOW Foundation, which works to educate the community about issues facing women and girls; Mass NOW Inc, which lobbies elected officials and community activists for legislation that supports equality; and the Mass NOW PAC, which works to get feminist candidates elected to help ensure a progressive and feminist legislature — this historic organization is pursuing equity, acting for justice, and building intersectional feminism in Massachusetts.*