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February 5, 2023

The Honorable Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker
Chair, House Finance - Subcommittee #2 Committee
General Assembly Building
201 North 9th Street,
Richmond, Virginia 23219

RE: Support for HB 540 (McNamara) – Relating to local sales and use tax exemptions

Dear Chair Bennett-Parker,

On behalf of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), the national trade association representing the leading manufacturers of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, dietary supplements, and consumer medical devices, I'd like to express strong support for HB 540. This legislation expands access to essential menstrual and incontinence products for Virginia residents by exempting these products from local sales tax or permitting a locality to do so.

Menstrual products such as tampons, sanitary napkins, menstrual cups, sponges, and pads are essential purchases for the vast majority of women. Unfortunately, millions of young and adult women face barriers to accessible, and affordable feminine hygiene products across the United States. According to a recent study published in the peer-reviewed journal, BMC Women's Health, in recent years, 14.2% of college-aged women had experienced period poverty, the prevalent phenomenon of being unable to afford sanitary products such as pads, tampons, or liners to manage menstrual bleeding. This study also showed that 10% of young women experienced period poverty every month.¹ The study found that the inability to afford menstrual health products likely impacts women's mental well-being. Women spend an estimated \$6,360 on menstrual products in their lifetime.²

Without access to proper menstrual products, women could repeatedly use certain menstrual products or substitute with alternatives such as paper towels or tissue paper. Prolonged use of these products, or use of alternative products, can lead to

¹ <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5#citeas>

² <https://swnsdigital.com/us/2019/11/new-research-reveals-how-much-the-average-woman-spends-per-month-on-menstrual-products/>

severe health complications. Therefore, improved access to affordable menstrual products is needed to support Virginia women, and some in the transgender community who menstruate, to avoid these negative health consequences.

In addition to the lack of access to affordable menstrual products, incontinence is a common health problem that has major social and economic impacts on the citizens suffering from it. According to the Urology Care Foundation, a quarter to one-third of men and women in the United States suffer from urinary incontinence.³ People are often at an increased risk of developing urinary incontinence due to aging, pregnancy, delivery of a baby, obesity, prostate issues, menopause, among other conditions. Although these conditions are often temporary, they can also be chronic or long-term.

Incontinence products such as absorbent pads, disposable underwear, and liners are essential purchases for a large percentage of Americans. These products help avoid the negative health effects of incontinence such as irritation, infections, and soiled clothing. With 22% of the US population expected to consist of individuals 65 years of age or older by 2050, coupled with an increase in health conditions contributing to urinary incontinence, access to these products is as critical as ever. In fact, one study found “women with severe urinary incontinence pay \$900 annually for incontinence routine care, and incontinence is associated with a significant decrement in health-related quality of life.”⁴

CHPA recognizes menstrual health and hygiene and urinary incontinence are pressing public health issues. The sales tax exemption proposed in HB 540 would be an important step to increasing access and affordability to critical menstrual and incontinence products for Virginia residents. We applaud Delegate McNamara for filing this bill and we urge the House Finance - Subcommittee #2 Committee to support this bill’s passage. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions on our position.

Respectfully submitted,

³ <https://www.urologyhealth.org/urology-a-z/u/urinary-incontinence>

⁴ Leslee L. Subak, MD, Jeanette S. Brown, MD, Stephen R. Kraus, MD, Linda Brubaker, MD,MS, Feng Lin, MS, Holly E. Richter, PhD, MD, Catherine S. Bradley, MD, MSCE, Deborah Grady, MD, MPH, and Diagnostic Aspects of Incontinence Study (DAISy) Group. The “Costs” of Urinary Incontinence for Women. *Obstet Gynecol* 2006 Apr; 107(4): 908-916.



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cc: House Finance - Subcommittee #2 Committee
The Honorable Delegate Joseph McNamara