



The Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters and Public Schools (H.1959/ S.1274)

Half the world menstruates.

- The average menstruating person has about 456 menstrual cycles and spends approximately 2,280 days (6.25 years) menstruating.¹
- The average menstruating person will use over 9,000 tampons and will spend about \$2,216 on disposable menstrual products over a lifetime.²

Access to menstrual products is a health necessity.

- Lack of access to menstrual products can force menstruating people to use unhygienic substitutes, or to use menstrual products for unsafe periods of time.
- Menstrual products are a health necessity. Non-menstruating people walk into a bathroom expecting their basic bodily needs to be met (toilet paper, soap, etc.) – this is not the case for menstruating people.

The I AM. bill would increase access to menstrual products in:

Public Schools	Homeless Shelters	Prisons and County Jails
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approximately 1 out of 7 children in MA is living in poverty³ and struggles to pay for menstrual products. ● Inability to access menstrual products affects students' class attendance and productivity, adding to educational inequality. ● Forcing students to go to the nurse's office for menstrual products- as if the student is sick- is humiliating, disruptive, and sends the wrong message to menstruating students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 20,000 individuals are homeless in Massachusetts- up 14% in just one year.⁴ ● Menstrual products are among the least donated items to homeless shelters. ● Lack of access to menstrual products is acutely difficult for homeless individuals who are already struggling to meet other basic needs. The federal government does not allow food stamps to be used to pay for menstrual products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restricted access to menstrual products means that they can be used as bargaining chips and tools of control. ● Federal legislation requires free menstrual products in federal prisons, but 95% of incarcerated women are housed in state prisons and local jails.⁵ There is no legislation requiring free access to menstrual products in Massachusetts prisons and jails.

Public policy does not adequately address the needs of menstruating people. **Massachusetts has an opportunity to change that.** Mass NOW's **I AM** bill would provide access to free menstrual products, without stigma, to all menstruating individuals in public schools from 6th-12th grade, homeless shelters, prisons and county jails. For more information, go to <http://www.massnow.org/iam>

¹ Jessica Kane, Here's How Much a Woman's Period Will Cost Her over a Lifetime, Huffington Post (Dec. 6, 2017), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/18/period-cost-lifetime_n_7258780.html

² Kane, *supra* Note 1

³ Marcus Giang, Massachusetts Poverty Rate Flat, Median Income Growth Slowed in 2017, MassBudget (Oct. 2, 2018) http://www.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Census-Income-and-Poverty-2018.html

⁴ Cynthia Fernandez, Number of Homeless People in Mass. is up 14 Percent, Boston Globe (Dec. 18, 2018) <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/12/17/number-homeless-rises-mass/OAGUA8qjiWmgoaMPsvPQzN/story.html>

⁵ Erin Polka, The Monthly Shaming of Women in State Prisons, Public Health Post (Sept. 4, 2018), <https://www.publichealthpost.org/news/sanitary-products-women-state-prisons/>