PERIOD POVERTY

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WHAT IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Lack of access to needed menstrual hygiene products (Wall, 2020)
  - May have to use alternatives such as toilet paper, paper towels, rags or clothing strips, socks, newspapers, diapers, etc
  - Poor menstrual hygiene may lead to higher rates of GU infections
  - Enormous source of emotional distress in school and workplaces
HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Study of female high school students in St. Louis (Sebert Kuhlmann et al, 2020)
  - Almost half did not have $ to buy menstrual products at least once in the last school year
  - 17% missed at least one day of school in the last year due to lack of access to menstrual products
    - 33% of 9th grade students
HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Study of students 13-19 yrs across the USA (Thinx & PERIOD, 2019)
  - 1 in 5 lacked financial resources to buy menstrual products
  - 25% missed class because they lacked menstrual products
    - Additional 59% knew someone else who had
HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Among college-age women in the USA (Cardoso et al, 2021):
  - 14.2% experienced in the last year
  - 10% experienced every month
  - STRONG association with moderate to severe depression (PHQ9)
How common is period poverty?

- Low income women >18 years (Sebert Kuhlmann, 2019)
  - 64% could not afford menstrual products in the last year
  - 21% could not afford monthly
  - Almost half had to choose between buying food or menstrual products in the last year
  - No differences by age
HIGH RISK GROUPS

- More likely to affect black, Latinx, immigrant youth (Cardoso et al, 2021)
- Low-income
- Non-binary, transgender, gender diverse youth
  - On top of $: stigma, accessibility and availability
WHAT CAN POLICYMAKERS DO?

- 2015: pilot program in NYC public school: provision of free menstrual products increases class attendance and reduces excused absences among female students
- 2018: California, Illinois, New Hampshire, New York State enact laws providing menstrual products in at least some schools
- November 2020: Scotland becomes first country to make menstrual products completely free
  - Followed by England, Wales, New Zealand
Tampon Tax

- 30 states: sales tax applies to tampons (up to 7%)
- Other 20 states:
  - 5 states: no sales tax at all
  - 14 states and DC: sales tax exempt for tampons
  - California: “temporary” tax exemption (expires in 2022)
CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY BILL 10 (2017)

- Applies to public schools containing any of grades 6-12 AND 40% of students below federal poverty threshold
- 50% of restrooms must be stocked with menstrual hygiene products (pads and tampons), provided free to students
FREE4ME INITIATIVE (SD COUNTY)

- Began May 2021 - To help improve access with COVID-related school closures
- Partnership with Aunt Flow® company
- Installed 58 free menstrual vending machines in 24 county facilities
“Menstrual Equity for All Act”

To start in 2022-2023 academic year

Removes requirement for 40% student poverty – ALL public schools including grade 6-12

Menstrual products to be free, accessible, and available in all women’s restrooms, all-gender restrooms, and at least one male restroom

Would also apply to CSU, community colleges, and “encouraged” for UC schools and private universities

At least one designated site on campus
WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Letter to our state representatives written by Dr. Nancy Graff
- Support for AB367?
- Other ideas?

- Please let me know if you want to help!!
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REFERENCES


