

Good Afternoon Committee Chair Hall and Tax Policy Committee Members,

My name is Emily Tujaka and I am a second-year law student at the University of Michigan Law School. I have been a Michigander my whole life, and during my time as an undergraduate at Wayne State University I was the co-founder, policy director and co-president of PERIOD., a subchapter of a national organization whose aim is to educate and advocate our communities on the lack of accessibility of menstrual products.

I have testified in front of this committee before, and I am proud to testify again as a supporter of House Bills 5267 and 4270. I have one main point that I would like to stress to the committee which should come to the forefront of each committee member's head as they think about how to vote on these bills: menstrual products are a medical necessity. Women have no choice but to purchase pads or tampons to catch the blood from their periods, and the current tax creates an unfair burden that not only forces women to spend extra money on things that they need to maintain their hygiene, but for financially insecure women and students, the tax is enough to completely deter them from purchasing menstrual products entirely. I have heard from women who have resorted to stuffing toilet paper or even paper lunch bags into their underwear to avoid having to spend money that they don't have on pads or tampons. It is simply unreasonable to ask women -- your wives, your sisters, your daughters -- to spend additional money because of a process that is natural and healthy, from a tax that could be reallocated elsewhere.

Committee members, especially male members; when you vote on these bills, I want you to put yourselves in the place of one of the women that I previously mentioned and imagine that you have to resort to unhygienic measures to deal with a process that is entirely natural. Your choice today could mean an increased quality of life for these women, and your support will bring Michigan one step closer to a fair and equitable tax system. I came to law school because I wanted to sit in the seats that you all sit in today, and I wanted to make a difference. I urge you all to unanimously support these bills today.