

# Senate Bill 260

## Menstrual Equity Act of 2023

Senator Caroline Menjivar (D – San Fernando Valley)

### SUMMARY

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SB 260 would make menstrual products accessible to all, regardless of income. Specifically, this bill would require the Department of Social Services (CDSS) to cover menstrual products by adding \$20 dollars in CalWORKs per month in aid for each menstruating CalWORKs recipient to purchase menstrual products.

### PROBLEM

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Menstrual inequities exist across California for our most vulnerable communities. Research shows that the lack of access to menstrual products impedes daily living. According to the Alliance for Period Supplies, “1 in 3 low-income women report missing school, work, or similar commitments due to a lack of access to menstrual products.”<sup>i</sup> The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising costs of menstrual products have exacerbated the issue of menstrual product insecurity. Since the beginning of the pandemic, “more than 2 in 5 people have struggled to purchase period products due to lack of income,” according to a 2021 survey conducted by YouGov.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, a study in the American Journal of Public Health found that significant health concerns arise when these necessary products are limited, such as anxiety, depression, and urogenital infections.<sup>iii</sup>

### BACKGROUND

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California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) provides cash aid and job services to low-income families. The average annual caseload for CalWORKs in 2020-2021 was 313,065. This caseload is projected to increase by 14% in 2023-2024 due to economic uncertainty. Under existing state law, CalWORKs recipients are not allocated money to purchase menstrual products such as tampons, sanitary napkins, and cleansing wipes.

A study in the American Journal of Public Health found that pandemic related income loss strongly predicted menstrual product insecurity, specifically for low-income individuals.<sup>iv</sup> Lack of access to menstrual products disproportionately

impacts Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The 2021 YouGov survey found that “A quarter of Black (23%) and Latina (24%) people with periods strongly agree that they've struggled to afford period products in the past year.”<sup>v</sup> Making menstrual products more accessible would assist our lowest-income families.

The most recent CalWORKs benefit expansion was in 2017, where recipients received an extra \$30 of assistance for diapers (AB 480 Stats. 2017 Ch. 690). In the last decade, California has taken the lead in addressing menstrual equity with AB 367 (Stats. 2021 Ch. 664), which requires all public schools serving 6th-12th graders, community colleges, and California State Universities to stock restrooms with free menstrual products. Moving the needle further with AB 150 (Stats. 2021 Ch. 82), menstrual products were permanently exempted from taxation. Most recently, AB 1287 (Stats. 2022 Ch. 555) was signed into law, abolishing the pink tax, which prohibits businesses from assigning different prices for identical goods simply because of gender.

### SOLUTION

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SB 260 would move California closer to gender parity by requiring the CDSS to cover menstrual products for each menstruating CalWORKs recipient. By removing this financial barrier to access, this bill would significantly improve the livelihoods of many Californians.

### STATUS

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Introduced – January 30th, 2023

### SUPPORT

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California High school Democrats (Co-Sponsor)  
California Generation Ratify (Co-Sponsor)  
Alliance for Girls (Co-Sponsor)  
The Pad Project (Co-Sponsor)  
Access Reproductive Justice (Co-Sponsor)  
IGNITE National (Co-Sponsor)  
PERIOD. (Co-Sponsor)

Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE) (Co-Sponsor)  
Sisters on the Streets (Co-Sponsor)  
Days for Girls (Co-Sponsor)  
Girls Learn International (Co-Sponsor)  
The Women's Building (Co-Sponsor)  
Alliance for Period Supplies (Co-Sponsor)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/California.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U\\_by\\_Kotex\\_Period\\_Poverty\\_-\\_PPAW\\_Data\\_Set.pdf](https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U_by_Kotex_Period_Poverty_-_PPAW_Data_Set.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4463372/>

## CONTACT

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<sup>iv</sup> <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306674#:~:text=Menstrual%20product%20insecurity%20outcomes%20were,ratios%20from%201.34%20to%203.64>

<sup>v</sup> <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/California.pdf>

