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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5272, An Act Concerning Menstrual Products

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Ranking Members Hwang, Somers, and Petit, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5272, An Act Concerning Menstrual Products.

On any given day, 800,000,000 people on the planet are menstruating. At least 500,000,000 of these people lack adequate resources—from the supplies to facilities to information—for managing their periods.¹ Lack of access to adequate period products has serious health impacts: inadequate products can cause infections and toxic shock syndrome, which can lead to increased susceptibility to STIs and hysterectomies.²

We cannot have full and equitable participation in society by women and other people who menstruate unless we ensure safe and affordable access to menstrual products to everyone who needs them. Without universal affordable access, people with periods will lose the full ability to work, get an education, and live a complete civic and social life.

¹ *25 Years: Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water, 2015 Update and MDG Assessment*, UNICEF & WORLD HEALTH ORG. (2015), available at http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_on_Sanitation_and_Drinking_Water_2015_Update.pdf.

² See Rochaun Meadows-Fernandez, *Getting Your Period Can Be a Pain. Getting It While Homeless Is Even Worse*, YES MAG. (July 27, 2017), available at <https://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/getting-your-period-can-be-a-pain-getting-it-while-homeless-is-even-worse-20170727>; see also *The Facts on Tampons – and How to Use Them Safely*, U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMIN. (Sept. 12, 2018), available at <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/facts-tampons-and-how-use-them-safely>.

For these reasons, House Bill 5272 is vital to ensure equal social and economic opportunities for people who menstruate. This bill requires the provision of menstrual products in a variety of settings: prisons, public middle and high schools, public higher education institutions, and homeless shelters. Importantly, this bill recognizes that people who menstruate are not limited to cisgender women and includes men and non-binary people, and accordingly ensures access to menstrual products regardless of gender. We urge this Committee to pass House Bill 5272.