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Testimony of

Kate Field

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Public Health Committee

***Re: SB 140 AA Requiring Free Feminine Hygiene Products in
Middle and High School Student Bathrooms***

February 26, 2020

Good afternoon, Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Representative Petit, Senator Somers, and members of the Committee on Public Health. My name is Kate Field, and I am the Teacher Development Specialist at the Connecticut Education Association and a former public school teacher. CEA helps active and retired teachers across the state advocate for students, teachers, and public schools. Thank you for considering my testimony today on Raised Bill 140, which would require the provision of free feminine hygiene products in middle and high school student bathrooms.

Health is a right, not a privilege, and the young women in our schools shouldn't have to be without a choice to practice menstrual health. Teachers recognize this and many provide menstrual hygiene products to students when asked, and by chance if they have products on hand. This is by no means a system that can ensure dependable access to the basic hygiene products women use. Toilet paper, soap, and hand towels are provided to all students, so why not feminine hygiene products, which are equally important for public health? Menstruation is a necessary biological function shared by all females, yet clean and healthy menstrual products are not easily accessible in most schools. This reality causes many young women to resort to using makeshift sanitary protection like socks, pieces of cloth, or paper products, putting them at risk for reproductive and urinary tract infections. As many as one in five young women in the United States leave school early or miss school entirely because they do not have access to menstrual hygiene products, potentially impeding their academic progress.

Menstrual products are necessities, not luxuries, and should be freely provided to females the same way toilet paper and paper towels are provided to all students. Doing so will help create a healthier, more inclusive school environment and represent a big step toward ending the menstrual stigma that continues to needlessly shame and embarrass young women.

Thank you.