



Illinois public colleges to provide free feminine hygiene products on campus

House Bills 155 and 310 are effective Jan. 1, 2022.

By WIFR Newsroom

Published: Aug. 5, 2021 at 12:29 PM EDT

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. (WIFR) - Gov. Pritzker signed three pieces of legislation making feminine hygiene products more accessible for women and girls in Illinois.

The three pieces of legislation, House Bill 641, House Bill 155, and House Bill 310, all remove financial barriers that have previously prevented individuals from purchasing hygiene products, according to the announcement from the governor's office on Thursday.

"I've made it a top priority to ensure that our state is at the forefront of protecting women's rights and women's health – all the more important as attacks against reproductive rights surge across the nation," Gov. Pritzker said. "Thanks to the three bills I'll sign today, we're reducing the burden of period poverty and making those very difficult personal choices a little bit rarer in Illinois. Because there's nothing to be ashamed of in addressing health equity for a mother, a daughter or a sister. Once again, Illinois is demonstrating what it means to stand up for women's health by protecting their dignity."

House Bill 641

The bill requires all public universities and community colleges across the state to provide free feminine hygiene products in campus bathrooms. The Board of Trustees at colleges and universities will determine the funding needed to meet the newly created requirement.

"Period poverty is a public health crisis, and these laws will enhance the everyday lives of people struggling to afford necessary menstrual hygiene products," State Senator Karina Villa (D-West Chicago) said. "Access and affordability of period products will no longer be a barrier to a student's proper education or a person's well-being in Illinois."

HB 641 is effective immediately.

"This legislation is an important step in normalizing menstruation. Approximately half our population experiences menstruation throughout a significant portion of their lifetimes," State Representative Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville) said. "This is a normal function of our biology and needs to be seen and treated as such. Menstrual hygiene products should be in restrooms in our public spaces, just like any other hygiene products, and I want to thank the institutions of higher education across the state for coming to the table to work with me to make this happen on their campuses."



House Bill 155

Illinois women living at or below the poverty line often face the difficult decision of choosing between paying for food or housing or buying diapers or feminine hygiene products. HB 155 requires the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to apply for a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, that would pave the way for recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to use the two programs for diapers and menstrual hygiene products.

At this time, the federal waiver is not available to states, and feminine hygiene products are not currently allowable for SNAP or WIC.

"The administration will continue to advocate for the federal government to create a waiver to help ease the financial burden for thousands of women across the state," according to the announcement on Thursday.

HB 155 is effective Jan. 1, 2022.

"Across the country, 1 in 4 women regularly struggle to purchase menstrual products due to lack of income," State Representative Barbara Hernandez (D-Aurora) said. "Today, Illinois is taking steps to help low-income women in our state overcome that challenge. Fighting against problems like period poverty is a privilege, and I'm so happy to be able to move forward on this issue."

House Bill 310

The Feminine Hygiene Products for the Homeless Act, requires all homeless shelters granting temporary housing assistance to women and youth to provide products such as sanitary napkins, tampons, and panty liners free of charge, if their budget allows.

"People who have been deprived of so much should not be forced to use other items as makeshift sanitary products," State Senator Christopher Belt (D-Swansea) said. "I cannot personally imagine the indignity women in homeless shelters feel. Today, however, is a step toward ensuring no one else has to feel the pain or embarrassment of not having clean, safe feminine hygiene products."

HB 310 is effective January 1, 2022.

"The legislation furthers the administration's ongoing work to make Illinois a national leader in ensuring women's healthcare is a right, not a privilege. In 2019, the Governor signed into law the Reproductive Health Act, guaranteeing that women in Illinois have the right to choose. Additionally, the administration expanded the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, which provides free screenings and diagnostic services to uninsured and underinsured women and also expanded insurance coverage for mammograms and other breast cancer screenings. Earlier this year, the Governor signed legislation granting Illinoisans access to birth control over the counter," the governor's office said.