

Gaithersburg-Germantown
Chamber of Commerce



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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



December 12, 2023

The Honorable Andrew Friedson
Council President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear President Friedson and Councilmembers:

Re: Bill 42-23, *Menstrual Products Access and Equity Act*

On behalf of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, and Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, we recommend against supporting Bill 42-23, *Menstrual Products Access and Equity Act* as currently drafted. While we commend the good intentions of the bill, our chambers ask that the Council oppose this bill and consider other proposals that would have a positive impact on period poverty.

If the Council considers legislative action, we would be supportive of an amendment to Bill 42-23 that requires only County-owned buildings, including but not limited to libraries, recreation centers, and regional service centers, to provide menstrual products in its bathrooms. This effort could be combined with an educational campaign that encourages members of the community to, if they have not done so already, provide free menstrual products voluntarily.

We contend that this bill is not necessary. The State of Maryland already requires that all middle and high schools provide menstrual products in their restrooms. Furthermore, Maryland reduces the costs of menstrual products by exempting those items from the State sales and use tax. It is also our understanding that a significant number of businesses and non-profits already provide menstrual products at their own expense or through partnerships that allow them to do it affordably.

Our chambers are also concerned about the bill's unknown expense to businesses. It is not difficult to imagine a scenario where free menstrual products in a business are taken on a consistent basis. In that scenario, small businesses in particular face high costs to keep menstrual products available, and the specter of a significant fine as mandated by Bill 42-23.

Bill 42-23, in our estimation, brings with it unintended consequences for the County's economy. County businesses are already facing a growing list of requirements that must via new laws and regulations. This proposal, which contains confusing language as to what restrooms even fall under this mandate, further complicates the environment that faces Montgomery County businesses. Ultimately, additional mandates on businesses harm the County's competitiveness and add yet another requirement that does not exist statewide or in virtually every other nearby jurisdiction.

We, as a united group of business organizations, appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on Bill 42-23 and ask that the Council consider other options to address issues regarding period poverty.

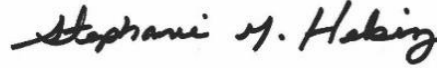
Warmest regards,

Georgette "Gigi" Godwin



President & CEO
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

Stephanie Hesling



President & CEO
Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce

Paula Ross



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Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce

Allie Williams



President & CEO
Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce