



Dear [Member of Parliament],

I am writing as a constituent of [insert constituency] to ask that you pledge your commitment to tackling period poverty and call for period products to be available for anyone who needs them. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the cost of living crisis, it is now more necessary than ever to ensure free and universal access to period products across the UK.

Period poverty is a lack of access to menstrual products due to financial constraints. It has been worsened by the current cost of living crisis: nearly 1 in 8 people in the UK have struggled to buy menstrual products in the last 6 months, having to prioritise spending on rising food, fuel, and energy costs (ActionAid UK, 2022). Being unable to afford menstrual products not only compromises a person's health, but their dignity as well. Every month, people are forced to use harmful alternatives such as socks or newspapers to manage their periods, and those who menstruate report feeling ashamed because their income does not stretch to this extra expense. Worryingly, two million young people aged 14-21 have missed part or all of a school day due to their period, with more than half citing anxiety or embarrassment as a factor (Plan International UK, 2021).

Charities tackling period poverty say that demand has increased through the pandemic and the current crisis. I am a supporter of Every Month, a volunteer-led charity based in Greater Manchester. Each month, they provide 800 people with free access to menstrual products in the Manchester area. They distribute 'period packs' which include 10 pads, 10 tampons and a chocolate bar to food banks and other services supporting those experiencing poverty. More groups and individuals have been requesting these packs from Every Month than ever before. Without the work of this charity, as well as Bloody Good Period, Freedom4girls and many more, people are forced to make the impossible choice between pads and food, or between tampons and paying the electricity bill.

But we should not have to rely on small charities and the kindness of donors to end period poverty. The UK government has a duty to ensure that everyone who needs period products has access to them. Therefore, it is crucial that current UK legislation is amended to expand the availability of free menstrual products in our society. Pledging greater free access in schools and hospitals is a positive step forward, but still fewer than half (49%) of school children report that free period products have been provided in their schools and colleges (Plan International UK, 2021). Providing truly universal free access to this fundamental right will shield period products from the effects of the cost of living crisis and put an end to the impossible choice that many face. In 2020, Scotland set a precedent by becoming the first country in the world to provide free universal access to period products, and I believe that this government must follow the Scottish parliament's example.

As a member of parliament, it is in your power to raise awareness and push for this legislation. Raising the matter in parliament, questioning ministers, and speaking about period poverty in the media, will help keep period poverty on the agenda. Further, it will be a great benefit to [insert constituency] constituents for you to support local charities and local efforts to increase the accessibility of menstrual products.

Please stand with us and call for the UK government to follow Scotland's example in providing free period products for all. In the midst of this cost of living crisis, being able to manage your period should be seen not as a luxury, but a right. We must ensure that all those who menstruate across the UK are afforded this right.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Regards,

[Your Name]