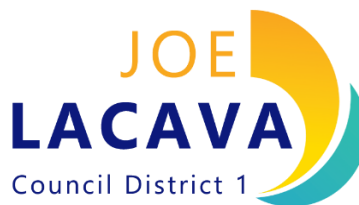


## PRESS RELEASE



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Inaugural Launch of Free4Me Pilot Program to Increase Feminine Product Access in the City of San Diego**

*Councilmember LaCava Proclaims August 30, 2023,  
“Menstrual Hygiene Equity Day,” in the City of San Diego*

**San Diego, CA-** Councilmember Joe LaCava introduced and gained unanimous support from the San Diego City Council to designate August 30, 2023, “Menstrual Hygiene Equity Day” within the City of San Diego. The proclamation was presented today by Councilmember Joe LaCava at the inaugural launch of the City of San Diego Free4Me Pilot Program.

“Today, we celebrate ‘Menstrual Hygiene Equity Day,’ and announce the installation of dispensers offering free menstrual products within facilities throughout the city,” said Councilmember LaCava. “This new City program ensures access to menstrual hygiene products, especially for our youth and under-resourced communities.”

Nearly two-thirds of low-income menstruating women in the U.S. face financial barriers in obtaining essential menstrual products. Today, many San Diegans struggle to afford tampons and pads. This financial strain forces them to decide between purchasing necessities like food or menstrual products.

Councilmember LaCava introduced the Free4Me Pilot Program, based on the County of San Diego's program, to address this inequity and increase feminine product access within the City of San Diego. At Councilmember LaCava's request, the Mayor and City Council included \$100,000 for the Free4Me pilot to place feminine hygiene products in City-owned facilities, targeting libraries, recreation centers, and public restrooms at beaches. "This is a pilot program that I will continue to advocate for on-going funding and expansion into more city facilities," said Councilmember LaCava.

Several other regional leaders shared their support for Councilmember Joe LaCava's Free4Me Pilot Program:

**Dr. Donofrio-Odmann, City of San Diego Deputy Chief Medical Director:** "Menstrual inequity is a public health concern for our women and youths. Without access to adequate menstrual supplies, short-term solutions such as using toilet paper or trying to wear a tampon for a prolonged period, can lead to hygiene issues from mild irritation, local infections, increased susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, and even sepsis or death from toxic shock syndrome. Inadequate access to these products can lead to decreased school days and even anxiety and depression. Those who are homeless, transgender, youth, and low income are disproportionately affected. The Free4Me pilot program is a medical necessity for our public."

**Jennifer Jenkins, San Diego Public Library Deputy Director of Customer Experience:** "The San Diego Public Library is committed to meeting the needs of the communities we serve. The Free4Me program is an important part of that mission. The library has offered period packs in the past, but the Free4Me program guarantees greater access to menstrual products across more San Diego Public Library locations, allowing us to offer these essential supplies to the San Diegans who need them and helping to end period poverty."

**Judy Vaughs, Planned Parenthood Public Affairs Manager:** "Our vision at Planned Parenthood is to create a world where sexual and reproductive rights are basic human rights, where access to health care and menstrual products doesn't depend on who you are or where you live, and where everyone has the opportunity to choose their own path to a healthy and meaningful life. Access to menstrual products is a human right, and we fundamentally believe that everyone who needs them should have access to these products. Menstrual Hygiene Equity Day is an example of the important work that can be done at the local level to protect and promote reproductive rights, which are under attack like never before."

**Maya De La Torre, Youth Will Executive Director:** "Access to period products should be considered a human right, one that Youth Will fights for because we witness period poverty's damage to youth. Students should not have to choose between their education or dignity, yet too many are faced with that impossible decision. Nearly half of the world's population experience menstruation, and we at Youth Will understand menstrual equity is the solution for

everyone. The Free4Me program exemplifies the amazing progress San Diego can achieve when young people are engaged in creating solutions."

Today's launch of the Free4Me Pilot Program marks a significant step toward a more equitable San Diego.

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*Councilmember Joe LaCava represents San Diego's First Council District, which includes the communities of Carmel Valley, Del Mar Heights, Del Mar Mesa, La Jolla, Pacific Beach, Pacific Highlands Ranch, Torrey Hills, Torrey Pines, and a portion of University City west of the 1-5.*