



**HAMILTON COUNTY
COMMISSION ON
WOMEN & GIRLS**

**2022 REPORT &
RECOMMENDATIONS**

PREPARED BY



**Hamilton
County**

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The 2021-2022 Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls

Founder & Executive Chair

Denise Driehaus, Hamilton County
Commissioner

Program Coordinator

Mary Maune

Steering Committee

Denise Driehaus
Mary Maune
Fatima Ba Abdoulaye
Jenny Brady
Jackie O'Connell
Jenifer Moore
Eileen Trauth

Women

Andrea Bertels	Ryan Dupree
Lauren Bishop	Janine Gage
Kari Bloom	Mary Gaertner
Hannah Boone	Priya Klocek
Valarie Boykins	Paula Lampley
Lucrecer Braxton	Shawnise Lewis
Paula Brehm-Heeger	Ann Neuer
Nature Brooks	Melone Ridgeway
Rebecca Brown	Ashley Thomas
Patricia Bruns	Alana Tucker
Dyesha Darby	Mary Wineberg

Girls

Lucy Becker
Mercedes Briggs
Audrey Chalfie
Addison Curp
Julia Poli
Aditi Purushothaman
Zacari Rochelle
Anna Schmitt
Saron Tefera
Lindsay Woodard



Background

A resolution adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) of Hamilton County, Ohio, July 19, 2017, established the volunteer Commission on Women & Girls. The Commission consists of twenty (20) women members and ten (10) student members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.

The Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls operates with the following purpose:

- The Commission shall make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners and local government jurisdictions to eliminate any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of marital status, on the basis of equality between men and women, of human rights or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field.
- The Commission shall facilitate partnerships between government, nonprofit, and business, which will support the mission of the Commission on Women & Girls.
- The Commission shall promote and encourage women to seek leadership positions in society, and help girls to develop leadership skills.
- The Commission shall develop public information and/or education campaigns to support the mission of the Commission on Women & Girls

Composition:

The Commission on Women and Girls shall consist of twenty (20) members and ten (10) student members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and organized as follows:

- The membership shall consist of community members with either professional expertise or personal experience relating to the issues of economic development, human resources, healthcare, violence against women, education, communications, and leadership development as they relate to women and girls.
- The members shall be diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, vocation, socio-economic status, ability, age, and political affiliation.
- The members shall be residents of Hamilton County.
- Each of the three members of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, the County Administrator, and the County Human Resources Director shall be *ex officio* members, and will not count toward the roster of 20 members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.
- In addition to the members, the Board of County Commissioners will select 10 students under the age of 18 who are residents of Hamilton County to serve as student members. The 10 student members shall be diverse in terms of age and level of education. The student members will serve for a term of 1 year and have all the rights and responsibilities of the other members of the Commission on Women and Girls.

Executive Summary

We find ourselves at a moment in time for women in society. While women currently make up 51% of the population, they do not enjoy equal representation in the institutions making decisions that influence their lives, careers, and well-being.

Around the world, the country, and Hamilton County, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has continued to reveal disparities in our community, and the fallout has not been borne equally. The pandemic has broadened the gender-and race-based inequities experienced in work, healthcare, and safety, with women and girls suffering disproportionately. By providing them with a seat at the table, they're able to bring their life experiences, perspectives, and expertise, to create real & sustained change for themselves and others.

The Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls was formed in 2017 by Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus to address gender inequity, raise up the voices of women and girls in public policy, and promote women roles on boards and other areas of influence.

Each year the Commission works to build off the previous year's list of recommendations, while also researching new challenges and opportunities to implement change. Under the leadership of the 2017 Commission, four Committees were formed by the interests and concerns identified by those members.

To this day, those same topics of Pay Equity, Social Mobility, Safety, and Health & Self-Identity have continued to serve as the Commission's areas of focus.

Being nimble and flexible to the circumstances and hardships of the on-going pandemic, this year's Commission worked to adjust their priorities to reflect new challenges identified while addressing the recommendations put forth by their predecessors. Online and in-person, they continued to engage with community partners, civic organizations, and local governments, to shed light on gaps of service, insufficient resources, and opportunities for collaboration that could lead to better outcomes for the women and girls of Hamilton County.

Through this research and community engagement, they've provided recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, future Commissions, and the community-at-large.

I am proud to share those learnings and subsequent recommendations for this term and we look forward to expanding our network of community partners, companies, schools, and governments to enact sustainable change.

Sincerely,



Mary A. Maune
Program Coordinator
Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls

Committee Work

Pay Equity

Initiative: Hamilton County Pay Equity Commitment

The Hamilton County Pay Equity Commitment is a voluntary, employer-led initiative to help close the gender wage gap in Hamilton County.

Who It Impacts

The Pay Equity Commitment will have a direct, positive impact on Hamilton County employers who choose to sign the commitment, their employees — particularly girls of working age, women, and those who are transgender, nonbinary, or gender-nonconforming — and the community at large.



Why the Initiative

This initiative is a continuation of the work conducted by the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Pay Equity Committees of the Commission on Women & Girls.

A key recommendation of the 2020 Pay Equity Committee was that the Commission on Women & Girls should develop and launch a 'Pay Equity Pledge' to help local employers take proactive measures to address the systemic issue of pay inequity and close gender and racial pay gaps.

In 2020 and 2021, the Pay Equity Committee developed what is now known as the Hamilton County Pay Equity Commitment. The 2021 Pay Equity Committee further refined the commitment and began circulating it to key employers in Hamilton County.

**Hamilton County
Pay Equity
Commitment**

Hamilton County
Commission on
Women & Girls

Pay Equity

Research

Pay inequities between men and women are well-documented, and recent research has drawn attention to deeper disparities that exist when factors such as race are taken into account. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had profound impacts on the gender and racial pay gap that may be felt for years to come.

Now more than ever, women need pay equity.

How Big is the Gender Pay Gap?

March 15, 2021, was Equal Pay Day in the United States – the day that marked how far into 2021 women working full time, year-round had to work to catch up to what men made in 2021 alone. To mark Equal Pay Day, the National Women’s Law Center released new data that showed how much women lose to the pay gap by race and ethnicity.¹

Women by race/ethnicity	What women were paid for every \$1 paid to white, non-Hispanic men	Typical annual losses	Typical losses over a 40-year career
Asian women*	\$0.95	\$3,000	\$120,000
Black women	\$0.64	\$24,420	\$976,800
Latina women	\$0.57	\$28,911	\$1,156,440
Native American women	\$0.57	\$27,000	\$1,080,000
White, non-Hispanic women	\$0.79	\$13,898	\$555,920

*Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) women

In Ohio, for every \$1 earned by white men, white women earned 80 cents and Black women earned 66 cents, according to research compiled by the Women’s Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation.²

Despite widely available data, many local employers have yet to take steps to address the gender pay gap. In an informal Pay Equity Committee survey of women who work for Hamilton County employers representing a range of industries, only 14% said they believed their employer had taken steps toward addressing gender and/or race-based pay inequities.

The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn have exacerbated longstanding inequities, especially for Black and Latina women. According to data that the National Women's Law Center released in March 2022:

Women lost nearly 11.9 million jobs between February and April 2020 and are still short over 1.4 million jobs since the start of the pandemic.

Black women and Latinas continue to experience unemployment rates that are higher than white men. In December 2021, Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely than white, non-Hispanic men and women to report a recent loss of household employment income, be behind on their rent, or not have enough to eat.³

According to the "Analysis of Black Women's Historical Labor Trends & Systemic Barriers to Economic Mobility" report by the Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation: "Black women breadwinners are concentrated in the very occupations most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, both as essential workers such as health care aides and as employees in the jobs most affected by furloughs and job loss, such as retail and food service."⁴

Over 1.1 million fewer women were in the labor force in February 2022 than in February 2020, meaning they are neither working nor looking for work.



What Happens When We Close the Pay Gap?

Closing the pay gap doesn't just benefit women — it also benefits the entire economy. If women were paid fairly, the poverty rate could be cut in half, and an estimated \$512.6 billion could be injected into the U.S. economy, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.⁵



Final Development and Adoption of the Hamilton County Pay Equity Commitment

In 2021, when the Hamilton County Pay Equity Commitment was developed using the Columbus Commitment as a model — providing employers with specific next steps to help close gender- and race-based pay gaps. This was also a recurring theme in our survey of local working women. To that end, the Pay Equity Commitment outlines more than a dozen recommended actions, ranging from conducting regular pay audits to tracking promotion rates by gender and race.

To date, we have distributed the commitment to over 50 local employers

and invited them to a public signing day on April 20, and 44 employers have signed the commitment.

There is a continued interest from the community and we look forward to receiving commitments from many more.

The continuing success of the Pay Equity Commitment — and progress toward closing the pay gap — depends on the support of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners as well as the next Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls and its paid staff.

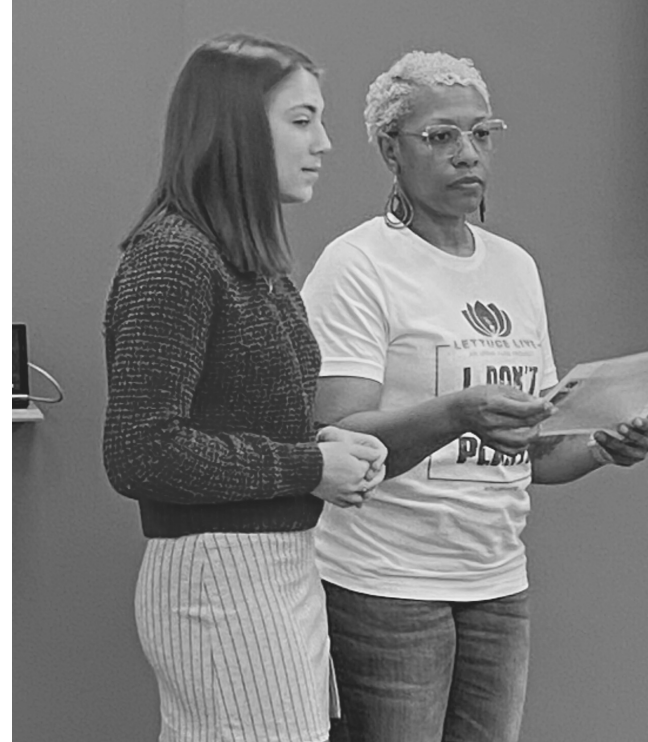
Pay Equity Committee Recommendations

Recommendations for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners:

- 1 Continue to analyze its own pay practices to identify and address any disparities.
- 2 Distribute the Pay Equity Commitment to other employers in Hamilton County as well as vendors who work with Hamilton County.
- 3 Publicly recognize employers in Hamilton County who have signed the Commitment.

Recommendations for the 2022-2023 Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls:

- 1 Explore ways to educate working women and girls on pay equity and empower them with negotiation strategies.
- 2 Explore ways to encourage or require employers in Hamilton County to provide pay ranges in job postings.



Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Bishop	Audrey Chalfie
Hannah Boone	Zacari Rochelle
Valarie Boykins	Anna Schmitt
Lucrecer Braxton	Ashley Thomas

Social Mobility

Initiative: Connect homeless and home-insecure minor-aged mothers and families with easily accessible resources for stability, critical support, and continued educational opportunity, and advocate to reduce generational teen pregnancy, housing instability, and drop-out rates.

Who It Impacts

Minor-aged mothers and their children in Hamilton County; community organizations serving these homeless and home-insecure families; general public to reduce stigmas around teen parents in Hamilton County

Why the Initiative

Building on the research and data collected over the last several years surrounding homeless children and their families, we narrowed our efforts for 2021-2022 to focus on the needs and gaps of minor-aged mothers. While there are resources and services available to minor-aged pregnant girls in Hamilton County, once their baby is born, there are few housing resources and services available to enable them to take care of themselves and their children together.

Critically, there are currently very few supportive housing options for teen parents with their child or children in Greater Cincinnati and surrounding areas.

Lack of childcare and transportation, inability to get jobs or apply for housing, legal issues, and domestic violence are all common and heartbreaking challenges they face.

Teen parents often find themselves homeless or home insecure because they are not allowed to remain with their parents and are often reluctant to share housing challenges through official channels such as: medical providers, Hamilton County Job & Family Services, or school authorities because they may fear custody of their child may be withdrawn.

Because minor teen mothers cannot legally sign leases, this often leads to housing insecurity and little hope of building a stable life for themselves and their child.

Without direct mentorship, support, and a high likelihood of dropping out of high school – reaching this cohort of girls with critical resources and avenues for ongoing support is difficult. Our subcommittee is presenting suggestions and resources that we found over the course of our research, with recommendations on how to reach teen mothers in ways to meet them where they are.

We hope our efforts can also raise awareness of the broader challenges of teen parents and the generational impacts of teen pregnancy, to help unlock greater support for them and reduce stigma and shame that is unfairly directed toward teen parents.

Social Mobility

Research

According to the CDC, 43.6% of births statewide in Ohio were to unmarried mothers in 2019, and Ohio ranks 19th for teen pregnancy rate with 18.8 births per 1,000 females 15–19 years of age.⁶

Justification for this year's focus on minor-aged teen mothers, to help link teen mothers with critical resources and services, and expanded awareness within the community at-large is also reflected in the supporting data from Rosemary's Babies.⁷

Rosemary D. Oglesby-Henry, Founder and CEO of Rosemary's Babies, notes that in Hamilton County:

- **3,000 teens have babies each year and 50% will have a second child by age 20.**
- **35% of all teen parents in Greater Cincinnati are homeless, and**
- **1 of every 20 teen girls between the ages of 13–19 will become a mother in Cincinnati.**

Ms. Oglesby-Henry cited the Avondale Quality of Life Plan⁸ that supports the urgent need for support for this population.

Because too often the reaction from the community is stigma and judgment of minor mothers, Ms. Oglesby-Henry discussed the need to ask teen mothers what led to their pregnancy and to include the fathers in the discussions.

Her findings reveal that often there are connections to domestic issues, abuse, and very difficult circumstances that lead to a teen's pregnancy. There continues to be a lack of awareness and understanding of this vulnerable cohort's circumstances and critical needs.

Driving Awareness

Teen parents often must rely on information they get through word of mouth from friends or supportive family members. They often do not know about existing resources or channels of support that they can access through existing programs or organizations. QR codes are an easy, low-cost, and quick way to direct teen mothers and homeless families to a website landing page of resources.

The website teenparentresources.org is an initiative via Rosemary's Babies Company, funded by bi3, that has already collected resources and information across key areas for teen parents, including: housing, health, transportation, education, budgeting and more.

Emergency support resources and information about other nonprofits and agencies providing emergency support is also available on the site.

A resource page for teen parents on the Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls website could help with marketing this information, along with additional emergency resources like needing to request a host family through an organization like Safe Families.⁹

Social Mobility

Organizations that may be interested in posting collateral with the QR code for teen parents include YMCA chapters, county organizations and agency buildings, courthouses, libraries, hospitals, Kroger, publications like CityBeat, Children’s Law Center, Lighthouse Youth Services, Cincinnati Metro buses, and the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office.



Context from previous Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls work

Through this year’s interviews and research, the Social Mobility Subcommittee continues to see the urgent need to network our most vulnerable homeless students with critical resources and services.

Our 2021–2022 Commission decided to focus specifically on minor-aged mothers within the homeless or home-insecure student population and suggest additional awareness methods.

In part, the 2020–2021 report read: This initiative would expand HCC website’s offerings of critical services to the community at-large. The link has the potential to form stronger partnerships with area school districts, social service agencies and other non-profits already working with our most vulnerable students and their families.

The long-term goal of this initiative is to raise awareness of the prevalence of this issue and to educate key community leaders, the community-at-large, elected officials, and other potential partners of the unique challenges facing homeless students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Social Mobility

Employing a QR code as the awareness method could be a very effective tool to get key info to minor mothers relates directly back to several key points within the April 2021 Social Mobility's Final Report. In particular, the April 2021 Report stated these recommendations:

Adopted by 2021 Hamilton County Board of Commissioners

Develop an appropriate format and platform for Homelessness Resources & Know Your Rights on the County webpage to expand families' access to critical information when facing homelessness.

Promote Homelessness Resources & *Know Your Rights* information as reasonable and appropriate to public school districts, county agencies, boards, and commissions and to residents of Hamilton County.

To the 2021-2022 Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls: Social Mobility Subcommittee

Explore the longer-term possibility of connecting community resources to create a one-stop service information resource for Hamilton County families who are struggling with or at risk of homelessness.

Create a marketing campaign to amplify access to critical services for students experiencing homelessness.

Social Mobility

Committee Recommendations

2022 Recommendations for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners:

- 1** Develop a marketing campaign to generate resource awareness for teen parents, including a QR code that would allow access to a resource website housed on the Hamilton County Commission's website.
 - This marketing campaign could be expanded to raise awareness of the challenges and gaps that teen parents face with their lack of rights within the community.
 - The QR code could be on collateral like posters, window clings, or business cards offered to local school districts, businesses, on Metro buses, and other places that teens frequent.

- 2** Explore use of American Rescue Plan Act dollars to provide right to counsel in eviction cases in Hamilton County specifically for low-income tenants with children, similar to what was passed in 2019 in the City of Cleveland.¹⁰
 - From 2021 Cleveland data, 93% of clients avoided an eviction judgment or an involuntary move, and 83% of clients who desired rental assistance were able to obtain it. Estimated net savings to Cleveland / Cuyahoga County from this right to counsel program have been about \$1.8-\$1.9 million.

- 3** Encourage Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority to prioritize/accelerate housing applications for pregnant women or caregivers to teen mothers.

- 4** Empower law enforcement officers in Hamilton County to share resources and contact information for support with teen parents that are involved in domestic calls.



Social Mobility

Committee Recommendations

To the next Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls Social Mobility Committee:

- 1** Continue to review and refine links on the Hamilton County Commission’s website and the public-facing marketing campaign with community partners, to evaluate effectiveness and surface new ideas.
- 2** Consider advocacy to expand emancipation rights: In the State of Ohio, emancipation as an adult means: graduating high school, turning 18 years old, and being able to maintain your financial situation. Generally, you can’t apply for emancipation in Ohio with exceptions (ex: if you get married at 16 and have those other conditions, then you can apply). In other states like Indiana, you can be emancipated before you turn 18.
 - This would create an option to expand the legal rights of teen mothers in cases where parents/ guardians are unable or unwilling to support them and their children, giving them the option to do things like sign a lease if their own parent/guardian makes them leave their home before they are 18, or be able to access childcare vouchers.
 - Expanding the rights of teen parents (even without emancipation) can give them the ability to grow into the responsibilities that they now have – being able to get their own birth certificate, social security card, opening bank accounts to earn their own money, enroll their child in daycare, etc.
- 3** Consider advocacy with local and state Officials: Continue to research best practices in other Ohio cities that address our goal, for recommendations to agencies, policymakers, etc.
- 4** Create a referral policy to organizations/agencies serving teen parents for law enforcement calls that involve teen parents, so that teen parents in crisis situations are made aware of nonprofit organizations in Hamilton County that can provide support and guidance.
- 5** Review the status of housing policies/recommendations that are currently being discussed at City Hall and in Hamilton County, to seek opportunities for greater housing options for minor and young mothers.
- 6** Research McKinney-Vento Act to determine if there are any provisions that ensure resources/ services for the child of a minor-aged mother enrolled in the school district.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lucy Becker Patricia Bruns
Andrea Bertels Ryan Dupree
Kari Bloom Shawnise Lewis
Saron Tefera

Safety

Initiative: To expand robust programs designed to reduce gender-based violence in Hamilton County high schools and middle schools. This initiative could start by requiring this type of program in the high schools of the county's largest school district--Cincinnati Public School (CPS)--as a matter of policy, either through health class or other school programs.

We recommend the program be implemented during grades 10-12, possibly focusing first on expanding its presence in CPS high schools, and ultimately all public, private, and parochial schools within Hamilton County.

Who It Impacts

Youth in Hamilton County, local schools districts, families of youth in Hamilton County



Why the Initiative

In 2010, The state of Ohio implemented the Tina Croucher Act.¹¹ This legislation requires public schools to incorporate dating violence into their policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and to require school districts to include dating violence prevention education in the health curriculum.

According to local program data:

- 57% of teens report having friends who have experienced dating violence, and¹²
- 33% do not tell anyone when they are in an abusive relationship.¹²
- Also, 25.8% of all females report first experiencing partner violence before the age of 18.¹³

Investing in this type of program as a source of prevention makes more sense than waiting to respond to a scene of violence.

Safety

Research

The formative years of development are middle school and high school, and it is best to learn about these topics in an academic environment with trained professionals. For example, the *Prevent and Empower* program from Women Helping Women (WHW) creates awareness that reduces the rate of violence through personal education and bystander education.

Members of the Safety Sub-committee interviewed several participating schools throughout Hamilton County and found variations among them in the implementation of gender-based violence prevention programs.

Data from WHW indicate that their Prevent & Empower program has the following results:

97%	... of students report they feel confident identifying signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
... of students feel confident setting boundaries with a dating partner.	95%
89%	... of students feel confident using bystander intervention strategies to intervene in harmful situations.
... of students feel confident identifying stereotypes and power differences that could lead to teen dating violence.	93%

Safety

Committee Recommendations

2022 Recommendations for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners:

1 Hamilton County Board of Commissioners work with CPS School Board and leaders (especially the incoming Superintendent starting in the 2022 - 2023 school year), and leaders from other school districts in Hamilton County to strategically grow access to these programs that teach prevention of gender-based violence to middle and high school students.

To the next Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls Safety Committee:

2 Work to expand a violence prevention program into other public schools, parochial, and private schools in Hamilton County once a framework is established in CPS and other public schools.



Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Neuer Aditi Purushothaman
Mary Gaertner Julia Poli
Dyesha Darby Lindsay Woodard



Health & Self-Identity

Initiative #1: Increase Equitable Access to Menstrual Products and Menstrual Health Information

Who It Impacts

All menstruating persons and their caregivers or support network throughout Hamilton County, particularly disproportionately affected populations including low-income, school-aged, homeless, incarcerated, non-binary, transgender, and gender nonconforming persons. Equity and ending stigmatization impact all menstruators and non-menstruating persons alike.

Why the Initiative

Menstrual equity has gained attention around the globe, across the United States, and right here in Hamilton County, Ohio. While progress has been made to combat period poverty and related health inequities through policy advancements, national and local organization collaboration, and grassroots efforts including that of this Commission, menstruation remains highly stigmatized and period poverty remains a pervasive issue.

Taking into consideration all previous efforts, initiatives, and progress made by this Commission and the community it serves, the Health and Self-Identity Subcommittee committed this year to laying a strong foundation for future recommendations and resolutions to combat menstrual inequities.

In February of 2022, the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners successfully

implemented the 2021 resolution to provide free menstrual hygiene products in Hamilton County buildings.

The strong leadership and actions as exemplified by the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners can be leveraged to continue to promote menstrual equity throughout Hamilton County.

By encouraging public and private entities to provide quality period products in public and private restrooms, we can begin to address the basic issues of menstrual hygiene, promote gender and health equity, and allow for all persons to reach their full potential.

Barriers to menstrual health equity grow more complex and further entrenched as the problem remains unsolved. COVID-19 continues to broaden the gaps in access to products, information, and the overall well-being of individuals across Hamilton County.

Menstrual health stigmas, misinformation, and lack of education continue to pose a problematic obstacle in achieving menstrual equity for all menstruating persons, especially in already marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Health & Self-Identity

To achieve menstrual equity, it cannot be about the distribution of or access to products alone, and must include meaningful education, based in science while using inclusive language and literature to reflect a diverse menstruating population.

We, as a society, must normalize menstruation.

Collaboration, commitment, and compassion are necessary pieces to addressing menstrual equity for generations to come.

There are community organizations and individuals fighting period poverty in schools, shelters, and many other institutions in our community. It is time we recognize organizations, I who are experts doing the work, like Girls Health Period, to share strategies and energy to create lasting change.



FEMININE
HYGIENE*
SHOULD*
BE FREE*

By creating a working group focused on menstrual equity, an interdisciplinary and collaborative model can be used to leverage individual efforts, reduce obstacles, and maximize potential for true menstrual equity.

Research

For the purposes of this report and the associated resolution presented to the Hamilton County Commissioners, menstrual products will be defined as pads, pantliners, tampons, menstrual cups, menstrual underwear, or any product designed specifically for absorption or containment of menses. Menstruators are defined as any person who menstruates regardless of gender or gender presentation.

Menstruation is a natural occurrence for over half of the population, occurring across the majority of the life cycle. Hamilton County, Ohio has a population of over 826,000 individuals and with an estimated 26% of a population being of “reproductive age” there are over 200,000 menstruators in our county (based on July 2021 data).

Free the Tampons, a Columbus, Ohio-based non-profit fighting period inequality, published data stating that 86% of women have started their periods while in public and without access to the necessary menstrual hygiene supplies. Furthermore, 79% reported creating makeshift substitutes for menstrual supplies out of toilet paper or similar items that are widely available in restrooms.

If there is toilet paper available in restrooms, tampons or pads should be as well. PERIOD.

Health & Self-Identity

Gender Equity Issue

While there has been notable growth in menstrual equity policies and achievements across the United States and around the world, government policies at local, state, and federal levels continue to cause or exacerbate the inequitable access of menstrual products.

Sales taxes, lack of products in prison and jail systems, the “luxury” classification of menstrual products in public benefit programs, and barriers to access products in schools and homeless shelters are all barriers to human equity.

Fortunately, Ohio is one of seventeen states that has repealed period tax, however, as a state and municipality there is much more work to do. Legislation is necessary for homeless services, correctional facilities, public assistance programs, and school distributions. Equitable education, productivity, engagement, and achievement are at risk for all menstruators until these policies are addressed.

The author of *Periods Gone Public*, Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, states that to have a fully equitable and participatory society, we must have laws and policies that ensure safe, affordable, and accessible menstrual products are available to those that need them.

This problem disproportionately affects vulnerable and marginalized populations reaching beyond gender identification.

Stigma, misinformation, politics, and discrimination can no longer be the gatekeepers for menstrual equity. Lack of access to menstrual products as the result of policy does not consider the needs of people who menstruate. This is a clear form of gender-based exclusion and a form of oppression, therefore the failure to consider menstrual needs is sex-based discrimination, disproportionately affecting women, non-binary, transgender men, and gender non-conforming persons. Menstrual inequity is a violation of human dignity.

Health and Hygiene

Health and wellness are human rights for all individuals regardless of race, sex, gender, religion, geography, or economics. Menstruation is a biological norm and must be treated as such. Basic hygiene needs such as toilet paper and soap are widely provided in restrooms across the United States. It is necessary to supply menstrual provisions in the same way to prevent infections and health complications from basic hygienic principles.

Due to complex barriers, menstruators often reuse products or use alternative products such as rags, tissues, or children’s diapers in lieu of quality menstrual products. Period product misuse can be attributed to urinary tract infections, human papillomavirus (HPV), cervical cancers, infertility, toxic shock syndrome, and even death. Safety while changing a menstrual product, inability to procure products, and poor knowledge of product use also contributes to the health issues of menstruators.

Health & Self-Identity

The psychological and psychosocial stress related to menstrual health, hygiene, and education contribute to each menstruator's experience with rippling effects throughout their lives. We must destigmatize menstruation so that our society can address the long-lasting impacts of the disruption, embarrassment, stress, anxiety, and shame that menstruators may face with every cycle.

In a recent report, 43% of respondents noted anxiety and stress while menstruating in public without necessary supplies and approximately 35% experienced feelings of panic. The long lasting injury to one's esteem comes from lack of information, bullying, teasing, pain, breakthrough bleeding, and the embarrassing "jacket moments" menstruators experience.

Cost

One of the more precluding obstacles in the fight for period equity is the cost of quality menstrual products available in the quantity to serve the needs of a community and the menstruating population.

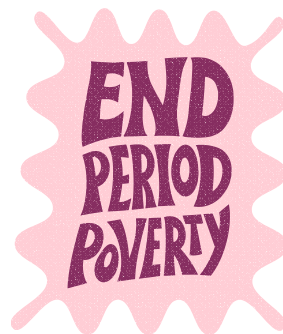
In one's menstruating lifetime, the average cost for a menstruating person can total over \$6,000. This number can greatly fluctuate based on the menstrual regularity and flow, type and quantity of products used, and where products are purchased.

In smaller, more easily accessed stores, the products tend to be more expensive and have a limited selection resulting in menstruators and caregivers to travel further for more affordable products.

This cost multiplies for families with multiple menstruating persons.

For low-income families and individuals or for the homeless population, the cost of menstrual products is especially burdensome. In a recent study, 64% of respondents did not have the funds to purchase menstrual hygiene products in the past 12 months, 21% reported this challenge on a monthly basis.

Federal assistance programs do not cover the cost of menstrual items, classifying them as a "luxury".



No one should have to choose between food, medicine, rent, and menstrual hygiene.

There is an important cost that is more difficult to quantify in the fight for menstrual equity, that of the missed opportunities in education, absenteeism, monthly disruptions, and productivity of menstruators in schools, workplaces, and society at large. Access to menstrual products has proven to improve the lives of menstruators, increasing personal dignity, school attendance, productivity, and participation in the workplace.

Confidence, self-determination, self-esteem, and knowledge as power increases the opportunities for all persons to reach their full potential regardless of gender.

Health & Self-Identity

Committee Recommendations for Initiative #1

Recommendations for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners:

- 1** Encourage and support public entities and all privately owned businesses with restrooms across the county, to provide menstrual hygiene products at no cost to the individual.
 - Explore formalized partnerships with menstrual health agencies to expand menstrual health support services as appropriate and create a sustainable plan of execution.
- 2** Convene a working group of representatives from across Hamilton County for the purpose of encouraging widespread participation in menstrual equity efforts led by the Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls and in partnership with community organizations addressing this topic.

Recommendations to the Community:

- 1** Recommend all public and private entities with restrooms for customers and employees provide menstrual products in all women's and family/unisex bathrooms, and some men's bathrooms.
- 2** Formalize partnerships between organizations providing menstrual products, such as Girls Health Period, and Cincinnati Public Schools to provide ongoing menstrual product supplies for menstruating students, employees, and visitors to school campuses.
- 3** Formalize partnerships between organizations providing menstrual products, such as Girls Health Period, and independent school districts and school programs across Hamilton County to provide ongoing menstrual product supplies for menstruating students, employees, and visitors to school campuses.
- 4** Cincinnati Public Schools should be encouraged to increase afterschool wellness programs like *Girls to Women* to include menstruation education and products to participants.
- 5** Explore partnerships with menstrual health organizations and suppliers such as Aunt Flo (an Ohio-based company) that supports similar initiatives in Cleveland and Columbus.



Health & Self-Identity

Committee Recommendations for Initiative #1

Recommendations to the 2022-2023

Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls



- 1** Examine and execute plan for the City of Cincinnati to address period poverty by offering menstrual product supplies at no cost in Cincinnati City Buildings as done in Hamilton County, Columbus, and Cleveland.
- 2** Communicate with members of the School Board for CPS to address period poverty in schools and formalize menstrual health education for all students, regardless of gender identity.
- 3** Collaborate with Hamilton County Parks, Cincinnati Recreation Centers, and the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library to offer menstrual product supplies at no cost.
- 4** Identify Key Stakeholders in communities across Hamilton County to continue the Work Group for Menstrual Equity by convening leaders from public entities and municipalities to raise awareness.
- 5** Engage Hamilton County Public Health to assist in increasing awareness of menstrual inequities and address it as a public health problem.
- 6** Create a sustainability model based on other existing programs across the United States.
- 7** Formally acknowledge Menstrual Hygiene Day (May 28th) and/or National Period Equity Day (October 9th) to increase awareness to menstrual equity issues in Hamilton County and across the United States.
- 8** Consider supporting formal legislation opportunities within the state of Ohio and nationally.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Brehm Heeger
Mercedes Briggs
Rebecca Brown
Addison Curp

Janine Gage
Paula Lampley
Alana Tucker
Mary Wineberg

Health & Self-Identity

Initiative #2: Increase Resources, Funding, and Support for Mental Health and Recognize World Teen Mental Health Day

Address growing mental health disparities that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic by devoting ARPA funds to increase mental health resources and support to existing agencies and programs across the county. All residents of Hamilton County deserve equal access to quality mental health support. ARPA funds would be designated to a variety of mental health organizations with a special focus on designating funds for agencies and programs that specifically target the youth of Hamilton County. To increase awareness for addressing mental health concerns, Hamilton County will recognize and support activities across the county for World Teen Mental Wellness Day on March 2, 2023.

Who It Impacts

All residents living in Hamilton County across the life continuum, particularly those suffering from unaddressed mental health concerns or diagnoses. The youth of our community need additional support, resources, and attention and we must improve access to services to ensure their long-term quality of life.

Positively impacting the mental health of citizens in our county can lead to lasting change and prosperity for all.

Why the Initiative

As an essential component to overall physical health and wellbeing, positive mental health increases success across a lifetime and a person's chance of living a longer and healthier life.

Mental health has rippling effects at work, for productivity, quality of life, social interactions, disease and related treatments, and health outcomes. Access to mental healthcare can improve lives and communities by reducing risks of suicide, legal issues, family conflicts, employment challenges, substance abuse, and further mental and physical health problems. Everyone is aware of the worsening state of mental health around the globe, exacerbated by the far-reaching impacts of a global pandemic.

Previously, the Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls has taken steps to improve mental health by creating a public health campaign aimed at mental health awareness. To target Hamilton County's youth, recommendations also targeted school districts across the region, urging them to simplify and communicate a comprehensive list of community resources for mental health.

This year, the Commission strives to use recent local and national data to ensure ARPA funds reach those hit hardest in our community, those suffering the most from mental health disparities, and those at high risk for long-term impacts of stress and isolation.

Our recommendations directly align with the commitment Ohio Governor Mike DeWine pledged in his State of the State Address in March 2022.

Health & Self-Identity

By increasing awareness and designating funding specifically to mental health support, Hamilton County can foster respect and dignity in the community. Working to eliminate disparities, calling attention to mental health issues, and offering compassion for our community can bring a renewed sense of hope for the people of Hamilton County. The Commission in partnership with Hamilton County Commissioners shall dedicate and recognize a specific day for Teen Mental Health on March 2, 2023. This designation represents a pledge to the youth of our community to celebrate diversity as a strength, convey the promise of healthier tomorrows, and promote an environment where everyone has a fair and just opportunity for mental wellness.

Research

One in five adults and one in four to five youths experience mental illness. This data from Hamilton County in 2020 reflects those that identify as having mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. In 2020, mental health was considered a significant issue for people across the United States and in just two years, new data has emerged reflecting a much deeper issue demonstrative of the catastrophic effects of a global pandemic. To have a positive outcome, we must understand the scale of mental illness, the urgency necessary to swiftly act on the issue, and its prevalence across the life spectrum. Our actions and recommendations must be informed by current data and trends occurring during the pandemic.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are categories of potentially traumatic events and exposures which can be used by mental health professionals as a tool for understanding long-term stress responses and impacts from childhood through adulthood. The number of ACEs and associated stress can lead to health problems such as asthma, growth, and development issues, learning difficulties and even more serious problems such as heart disease or cancer later in life. According to experts, the COVID-19 pandemic may amplify ACEs and exacerbate the stressors experienced across the lifespan. Social isolation, job loss, school closures, housing and food insecurities, and economic strain can cause both direct and indirect stress that has now lingered for years.

It is important to understand how ACEs and the pandemic are inextricably linked, including how these phenomena disproportionately affect low-income and ethnic minority populations. These marginalized and disinvested populations are already at increased risk for ACE-impacted conditions. Low-income and impoverished households have been consistently linked with poor health and increased risk for psychological disorders in children and adults that can persist across the life span.

Despite the increased need for mental health assistance, children and their adult family members living in low-income and disinvested communities are unlikely to gain access to high-quality mental health services.

Health & Self-Identity

There is a growing urgency to develop models of mental health care that are tailored to the needs of these vulnerable children and the increased intra-familial adversity experienced by their families.

The impact on school aged youth is cause for major concern in combination with its inevitable consequences if left unaddressed. Evidence published by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) demonstrates students aged 6-17 with mental health concerns are three times more likely to repeat a grade, 37% of students drop out of school, and more than 90% of children who die by suicide suffered from mental illness.

We are just beginning to see the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health data for those in school; the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) completed the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES) to better understand the negative impact and adverse effects of the pandemic on mental health. The ABES project investigated topics of economic and food insecurity, parental abuse, alcohol and drug behaviors, tobacco use, sexual behaviors, social engagement, and mental health assessments amongst others.

The ABES project showed:

- **37% of students experienced poor mental health during the pandemic**
- **44% experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness**
- **almost 20% had seriously considered suicide**
- **9% had attempted suicide.**

These findings also demonstrated that the prevalence of poor mental health and suicide ideation was high across students of all sex, sexual identity, and racial and ethnic groups. The data from this study and others underscore the importance of urgent action to address the mental health of school-aged children and teens.

In recognition of the rising mental health concerns for young and old alike, Governor Mike DeWine declared mental health service transformation a key goal for his administration. In his State of the State Address given on March 23, 2022, the governor aims to invest significant resources to help ensure mental health support is visible, accessible, and effective. Governor DeWine hopes to create “the opportunity for people with mental illness to build the skills to lead joyful, meaningful lives...contributing to the vitality of their communities.” His initiatives recognize the need for a robust behavioral health workforce, to increase research and innovation, and improve crisis response services while increasing prevention efforts. The governor also called out spending in schools, focusing attention to on-site services, counselors, prevention, after-school care, and training and programming focused on childhood trauma.

To further potentiate the commitment from the Ohio governor, we must explore additional solutions to the growing problems of mental health in Hamilton County.

The \$65 million of funding provided to the County under the ARPA is designed to allow for local governments to make strategic investments directly to communities and infrastructures in need of assistance.

Health & Self-Identity

The ARPA funds are being provided to assist in the ongoing stability of specific civic areas until economic conditions and operations normalize. There are innumerable organizations, societal issues, and complex systems that could be addressed with ARPA dollars.

The impact of additional funding on mental health support services should be viewed as a priority.

Every dollar spent on mental wellness can positively impact those in need of support. To build a more resilient and protected community, we need to invest in comprehensive approaches to healthy behaviors, bridge the gap in services, connect social and emotional learning to promote mental wellness across the lifespan.

Interventions need to be designed to destigmatize, decrease isolation, and reflect a culturally diverse population across the life and family cycle.

Social media and public messaging must be utilized to reach those that are least likely to seek assistive therapies and programs, and it is essential to invest in the mental health providers to ensure ongoing learning, fair compensation, and program expansion.

Trauma-informed care and social determinant screenings should be provided by all healthcare and school professionals, including teachers and support staff, and community organizations that work directly with vulnerable populations.

In addition to infrastructure support and expansion, community resources and efforts should focus on raising awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness across all ages, but for youth in particular. By designating a day for Teen Mental Wellness, the County can target a particularly vulnerable population while it is still engaged in services and support through school and after-school programming.

Particular attention and support should be paid to including ideas and activities designed for and by the teens themselves. According to National Today, World Teen Mental Wellness Day is important to encouraging conversations about mental health where people often fail to understand the experience of youth and teens. The open conversations, awareness, and activities to promote mental health in teens have far reaching potential.

Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, young adults, and the geriatric population are real and widespread. More importantly, mental health issues are treatable and often preventable. The pandemic's fear, perpetual unknowns, and forced isolation has forever changed our society. Rather than perpetuating the negative impacts of these unprecedented challenges, we as a county, state, nation, and global community can make dramatic changes to enhance our lives positively and permanently for generations to come. Let us choose to promote comprehensive wellness starting with our most vulnerable.

Health & Self-Identity

Committee Recommendations for Initiative #2

Recommendations for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners:

- 1** Devote American Rescue Plan Act funds to increase mental health resources and support to existing agencies and programs across Hamilton County.
 - A portion of the ARPA funds for mental health should be allocated specifically for combating the issues of mental health in youth and teens across the county.
- 2** Increase awareness for addressing mental health concerns for the youth of Hamilton County by sponsoring and supporting activities across the county for World Teen Mental Wellness Day on March 2, 2023.
 - Consider expanding this event to become an annual day of awareness.

Recommendations to the Community:

- 1** Encourage all professionals that work in a health and wellness environment to complete training for trauma informed care.
- 2** Encourage all professionals working in schools, daycares, and afterschool programs to complete training for trauma informed care.
- 3** Create marketing campaigns (via print or social media) in community spaces by community members to normalize mental health and mental health services in efforts to address stereotypes, reduce misinformation, and target vulnerable groups.
- 4** Review and implement strategies for addressing mental health services and support across Cincinnati Public Schools and districts across the county.
 - Designate CARES and ARPA funds to create and promote student mental health services.
- 5** Collaborate with Hamilton County and the Hamilton County Commission on Women and Girls to recognize and celebrate World Teen Mental Wellness Day.
 - Work with local schools and youth groups to organize activities for bringing awareness to World Teen Mental Wellness Day.
- 6** Promote mental health campaigns in Cincinnati Public Schools and districts across Hamilton County.
 - Create student led organizations and projects focused on improving mental health for students.
 - Increase awareness of mental health resources specific to students.

Health & Self-Identity

Committee Recommendations for Initiative #2

Recommendations to the 2022-2023

Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls:

1 Collaborate with local schools and/or mental health agencies across the county to promote Teen Mental Wellness Day.

2 Consider a social media campaign to build off the momentum and accomplishments of the initial awareness campaign video created by the Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls.

3 Meet with and recommend to Cincinnati Public Schools and districts across Hamilton County to partner with the Hamilton County Commission on Women & Girls for future resolutions and recommendations.

4 Explore partnerships with community agencies and social programs that address mental health and/or interact with youth across the county and increase efforts to collaborate, recognize, and promote said programs.



Respectfully submitted,

Paula Brehm Heeger
Mercedes Briggs
Rebecca Brown
Addison Curp

Janine Gage
Paula Lampley
Alana Tucker
Mary Wineberg



Acknowledgements

Interviewees and Research Contacts

Alex Kuhns, Executive Director, UpSpring Cincinnati
Bobbi Dillion, Senior Manager, State Government Relations at the Procter & Gamble Company
Bonita Campbell, MS, LSW, Vice President – Homeless Youth Services, Lighthouse Youth & Family Services
Briana Barker
Bridget Doherty, Communications Manager, Hamilton County Administration
Brigid Kelly, Ohio House of Representatives
Brittani Gray, Founder and Executive Director, Girls Health Period
Candice Crear, Founder and CEO, From Fatherless to Fearless
Elaine Fink, Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
Erikka Gray, Board President, Girls Health Period
Jackie D. Lyons, LCDC, Substance Abuse Counselor, First Step Home
Jaime Mutter, Program Director, Every Child Succeeds, Santa Maria Community Services
Jen Brogan, Good Samaritan Hospital, TriHealth
Jenifer Broering, Brighton Women’s Center
Jennifer Hoefle, Manager of Maternal Services, First Step Home
Jennifer Mooney, Assistant Health Commissioner, Hamilton County Public Health
JoAnne Dwyer, Case Worker, Every Child Succeeds, Santa Maria Community Services
Jodi Stanton, Hamilton County, Ohio Juvenile Probation GEMS program
Jolene Almendarez, Reporter, WVXU
Kelly Malone, Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
Kristin Smith Shrimplin, President & CEO, Women Helping Women
Megan Fischer, CEO and Founder, Tidal Babe Period Bank and Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank
Mike Moroski, Cincinnati Public Schools board member and Executive Director, Human Services Chamber of Hamilton County
Molly Russell, Senior Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
Monique Gilliam, Lead Organizer, Cohear
Natalie Centers, Student Support Services & Mental Health Clinician, Seton High School
Nikita Anderson, Director of Community, Cohear
Rosemary Oglesby–Henry, Rosemary’s Babies Company
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Sarah Mills, Chief Executive Officer, Health Care Access Now
Shauna Murphy, Assistant Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools
Shelly Conrad, Student Engagement Specialist, Girls to Women District Coordinator, Cincinnati Public Schools

Acknowledgements

Interviewees and Research Contacts (cont.)

Shelly Beiting, Policy Director & Executive Director, Columbus Women's Commission

Sheri Pope, Community Health Worker, TriHealth

Susan S. Schiller, Chief Executive Officer, Bethany House Services

Tianya Amat, Former Interim Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools

Footnotes

1. National Women's Law Center, *"The Wage Gap Robs Women of Economic Security as the Harsh Impact of COVID-19 Continues."* Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/resource/the-wage-gap-robs-women-of-economic-security-as-the-harsh-impact-of-covid-19-continues>.
2. Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation's Research Committee, *"Analysis of Black Women's Historical Labor Trends & Systemic Barriers to Economic Mobility."* Retrieved from: https://www.gcfnd.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/Final_Hist_Black_Women_Report_Design.pdf
3. National Women's Law Center, *"The Wage Gap Robs Women of Economic Security as the Harsh Impact of COVID-19 Continues."* Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/resource/the-wage-gap-robs-women-of-economic-security-as-the-harsh-impact-of-covid-19-continues>.
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5. Jessica Milli, Ph.D., Yixuan Huang, Heidi Hartmann Ph.D., and Jeff Hayes, Ph.D., Institute for Women's Policy Research, *"The Impact of Equal Pay on Poverty and the Economy."* Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/C455.pdf>.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health: Key Health Indicators: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/ohio/oh.htm>
7. Avondale Quality of Life Plan: <https://www.growavondale.org/qol>
8. Rosemary's Babies Teen Parent Resources: www.teenparentresources.org
9. Safe Families for Children, *"Request a Host Family - Do You Need a Host Family":* <https://safe-families.org/get-help/request-a-host-family/>
10. National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, *"All about Cleveland's eviction right to counsel":* http://civilrighttocounsel.org/major_developments/1382
11. [Ohio House Bill 19 – The Tina Croucher Act. 2010](#)

Footnotes (cont.)

12. YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Teen Dating: <https://www.ywcacincinnati.org/whatwedo/preventionandintervention/youthservices/teendating>
13. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief – Updated Release: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

Additional Research Links and Information

1. City of Cincinnati Community-Wide Housing Strategy, Presentation to Property Tax Working Group November 21, 2019: https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/planning/assets/File/PTWG_11_21_19_LISC%20Presentation.pdf
2. 91.7 WVXU | By Becca Costello, Published March 11, 2022: [Everyone on council wants housing equity. But they don't agree on how to do it](#)
3. LISC Greater Cincinnati:
 - a. Housing our Future: Strategies for Cincinnati and Hamilton County: <https://www.lisc.org/greater-cincinnati/what-we-do/housing-our-future/housing-our-future-events/>
 - b. Affordable Housing: <https://www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/affordable-housing/>
4. Lighthouse Youth & Family Services: <https://www.lys.org>
5. ACLU Menstrual Equity: A Legislative Toolkit Prepared by ACLU National Prison Project, Period Equity, December 2019 <https://www.aclu.org/report/menstrual-equity>
6. Aunt Flow – Tampons and Pads for Businesses and Schools, Ohio Based, Female Owned <https://www.goauntflow.com/>
7. California Assembly Bill No. 367 – Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021 https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20212022OAB367
8. [Cleveland City Council Ordinance No. 925-2021 Establishing Program for Hygiene Product Access](#)
9. Free The Tampons <https://www.freethetampons.org/>
10. Free the Tampons – The Murphy's Law of Menstruation: http://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/1/1/9/6/119665890/ftt_infographic.pdf
11. Frontiers In Reproductive Health – A Policy for Addressing Menstrual Equity in Schools <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frph.2021.725805/full>
12. State of the Period 2021 – The Widespread Impact of Period Poverty on US Students <https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>
13. WVXU Article for HCCWG Addressing Period Poverty 2022 <https://www.wvxu.org/education/2022-01-26/free-period-products-cincinnati-public-schools-hamilton-county-commission>

Acknowledgements

Additional Research Links and Information (cont.)

14. [Ohio Department of Education](#) -

McKinney-Vento Act Overview and American Rescue Plan (ARP) Emergency Relief Funding Guidance and Resources

SUSANNAH WAYLAND-State Homeless Education Coordinator

(614) 387-7725 Susannah.Wayland@education.ohio.gov

HomelessEducation@education.ohio.gov

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/Homeless-Youth>

15. [SchoolHouse Connection](http://schoolhouseconnection.org) - <http://schoolhouseconnection.org>

(A partner with the Ohio Department of Education and well-known by many of our local agencies working with homeless students)

SchoolHouse Connection is a national non-profit organization working to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with early childhood programs, schools, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth. We believe education is the only permanent solution to homelessness. Our vision is that children and youth experiencing homelessness have full access to quality learning, birth through higher education, so they will never be homeless as adults, and the next generation will never be homeless.

- 19 Members of Congress Call for Efficient Rent Relief Through School Partnerships. Nov 4, 2021/Policy Updates: <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/19-members-of-congress-call-for-efficient-rent-relief-through-school-partnerships/>
 - On Tuesday, October 13th, a Dear Colleague Letter led by U.S. Representative Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), and signed by 18 other U.S. Representatives, called on the U.S. Department of Treasury to prioritize partnerships with local educational agencies in the distribution of Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funds. To date, only \$10.3 billion of the \$46 billion available for Emergency Rental Assistance has been disbursed to households. Schools are well-positioned within communities to connect families to ERA providers, and to directly distribute rental assistance to families in a timely manner.

Acknowledgements

Additional Research Links and Information (cont.)

16. 2019 Youth Summit Washington, DC :

<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/dc-summit/>

During the 2019 DC Summit, SchoolHouse Connection’s scholars shared their wisdom, insights, and experiences with congressional staff and U.S. Department of Education policymakers in Washington, D.C.. The students traveled from Wisconsin, Texas, North Carolina, California, Montana, Indiana, and Washington. All the young people have experienced, or are experiencing homelessness, have graduated from high school and are either in college or recently completed college.

Speaking at a Congressional briefing sponsored by U.S. Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Steve Stivers (R-OH), Danny K. Davis (D-IL), and Dave Loebsack (D-IA), the scholars urged us to remember:

“Making assumptions is very dangerous. Homelessness looks different for everyone. Different people need different things and that should be reflected in policies.”

Scholars described barriers to education and health caused by homelessness, as well as the programs, policies, and people who made a difference and helped them to make it to high school graduation. They also spoke about the importance of a postsecondary education and supports they needed to be successful in higher education.

“When I transitioned into college, I had nothing. It was college or bust. There is so much to do with my life, but I know if I don’t do college, I have nothing left.”

More about Steve Stivers @ Cleveland Plain Dealer

Updated: Apr. 19, 2021, 5:36 p.m. | Published: Apr. 19, 2021, 9:54 a.m.

<https://www.cleveland.com/open/2021/04/rep-steve-stivers-resigning-to-take-ohio-chamber-of-commerces-top-job.html>

17. 91.7 WVXU News – Cincinnati Edition:

- December 15, 2021 – How area organizations help young adults transition out of the foster care system (Cincinnati Edition): <https://www.wvxu.org/show/cincinnati-edition/2021-12-15/how-area-organizations-help-young-adults-transition-out-foster-care>
- December 15, 2021 – Ohio lawmakers want a bill of rights for kids in foster care: <https://www.wvxu.org/podcast/cincinnati-edition/2021-12-15/ohio-lawmakers-foster-care-bill-of-rights>