



Hope & Comfort Volunteerism at Home

Letter Writing for Advocacy

Thank you for your interest in supporting Hope & Comfort's mission to end hygiene insecurity. As we work to address the dual issues of hygiene insecurity and period poverty, raising awareness and building public support for ending these issues is essential. You can support this work by taking action and writing to leaders in your community. Use this guide as a resource for drafting letters to leaders in your community.

If you have questions, please reach out to:

Abby MacDonald
Community Engagement Manager
amacdonald@hopeandcomfort.org
774-847-1224

Thank you for your support of our mission to end hygiene insecurity!

About Hope & Comfort

Hope & Comfort's mission is to provide essential hygiene products to support and improve the health, self-esteem, and hygiene education of youth in need across Greater Boston.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits do not cover hygiene products. These items are expensive and buying them shifts money away from other urgent needs. This makes getting essential hygiene products a huge challenge for youth and families in need.

At Hope & Comfort, we know how something as basic as a bar of soap can have a huge impact on an individual's health, as well as their self-esteem and sense of dignity. Through our network of over 150 community partners, we distribute essential hygiene products including shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, bars of soap, and deodorant to those who need them the most. In 2020 alone, Hope & Comfort distributed over 1.5 million hygiene products. In 2021, we aim to distribute 2 million hygiene products, impacting over 50,000 individuals.

Hope & Comfort's vision is that one day, everyone in the US will have access to the basic hygiene products they need to feel clean, confident, and healthy.

Visit www.hopeandcomfort.org to learn more, make a donation, or get involved. Or reach out to the Hope & Comfort team at info@hopeandcomfort.org or 617-795-1608. Hope & Comfort is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (tax ID 45-1329518).

You Can Be an Advocate in the Fight to End Hygiene Insecurity and Period Poverty!

This activity aims to raise awareness about hygiene insecurity and period poverty among community leaders and others in positions of power, inspiring them to take action. With heightened awareness, we can build coalitions and set the stage for future change.

Getting Started

To get started, identify the community leader you'll plan on writing to. It can be a local elected official, school administrator, business leader, or others in position of power. You can easily find this information with a quick Google search! Some potential stakeholders include:

- Your town select board or city council.
- Your town/ city superintendent of schools.
- Your principal.
- Your state representative or state senator.

Once you identified who you'll be writing to, you'll want to figure out how to reach them. Find their contact information and decide whether you will send a handwritten letter or an email. (If you want to send a note via snail mail, let Hope & Comfort know and we'll send you some branded notecards and stamps!) Now you're ready to start writing...

Outlining & Writing Your Letter

There are several key elements you'll want to include in your letter, including:

- Your name and your role as a Hope & Comfort ambassador (a Hope & Comfort volunteer, supporter, etc.).
- Why you're writing to this community leader/why you're passionate about ending hygiene insecurity and period poverty.
 - Example: You believe that everyone should have access to hygiene and menstrual products.
- Be persuasive using compelling facts and figures. This will help strengthen your argument. Below is some powerful data you could include:
 - 1 in 5 youth in Massachusetts is currently experiencing hygiene insecurity and period poverty.
 - Youth who lack consistent access to menstrual products are more likely to miss school or have their school performance suffer as a result.
 - In a recent survey by Hope & Comfort, 9 out of 10 participants surveyed stated they were more stressed when they didn't have the hygiene or menstrual products they need.
 - Hygiene and period products are NOT covered by SNAP benefits, formerly known as food stamps.
 - 58% of low-income individuals have reported cutting back on food to afford hygiene products.
 - 68% of participants in a recent Hope & Comfort survey reported that they regularly run out of hygiene products such as soap, deodorant, and toothpaste.
- Suggestions for how they can take action to address hygiene insecurity and period poverty. Examples might include...
 - Simply learning more about these issues and how they affect community members. Awareness matters!
 - Proposing legislation to address hygiene insecurity and period poverty
 - Providing free period products in school bathrooms
- Your thanks and next steps.
 - Make sure to include a thank you!
 - Encourage them to learn more about hygiene insecurity in the Greater Boston community by visiting Hope & Comfort's website at www.hopeandcomfort.org.

Once you've outlined your key points, it's time to start writing! You can find a sample letter below.

Sample Letter

Below is a sample letter to Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools.

Dear Dr. Cassellius,

My name Jane Smith, and I am Boston high school student and volunteer at Hope & Comfort. Hope & Comfort's mission is to provide essential hygiene products to support and improve the health, self-esteem, and hygiene education of youth in need across Greater Boston.

I am writing to you to encourage you to take action and address period poverty among Boston's public school students. Did you know that 1 in 5 youth in Massachusetts is currently experiencing period poverty? This means that they lack access to the menstrual products they need to feel confident and stay healthy. I'm passionate about addressing period poverty because I believe no one should have to wake up and go to school worried because they can't afford something as simple as menstrual products.

As Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, I encourage you to address this issue that students are facing. I believe that providing free menstrual products in all school bathrooms could have an enormous impact on students experiencing period poverty.

Thank you for your time. If you would like to learn more about period poverty in the Greater Boston community, I encourage you to visit Hope & Comfort's website at www.hopeandcomfort.org. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Jane Smith
Boston High School Student
Hope & Comfort Volunteer

Next Steps

Once you've completed your letter, go ahead and send it to your community leader. If you'd like to mail it, reach out to Hope & Comfort and we'll provide a notecard with our logo and stamps for you to us.

We encourage you to share photos and/or copies of your letter with Hope & Comfort so we can use them for further advocacy. Please email photos/copies to:

Abby MacDonald, Community Engagement Manager
amacdonald@hopeandcomfort.org

Thank You!

Thank you for supporting Hope & Comfort's mission to end hygiene insecurity. Building awareness and support of our mission is essential to ensuring youth and families in need have the hygiene products they need to feel confident and stay healthy.

Thank you!