

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 8

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating the last full week of May of each year as “Period Poverty Awareness Week” in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, “Period Poverty” is defined as inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products and education, clean toilets, and handwashing facilities; and

WHEREAS, The average menstruator spends approximately \$9 per month, or \$1,964 over the course of a lifetime, on menstrual hygiene products; and

WHEREAS, As of 2021, 30 states impose a “tampon tax,” or a sales tax on menstrual hygiene products, making these essential health products even more difficult for low-income menstruators to afford; and

WHEREAS, Ten percent of New Jersey women live in poverty, according to data compiled by Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, 66 percent of low-income menstruators surveyed in St. Louis, MO reported being unable to afford menstrual hygiene products at some point during the previous year, while 20 percent of these respondents faced this problem on a monthly basis; and

WHEREAS, One in five low-income menstruators reports missing school, work, or events because they lack access to menstrual hygiene products; and

WHEREAS, Federal statute and regulations prohibit safety-net programs for low-income individuals, such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), from providing enrollees with free menstrual hygiene products; and

WHEREAS, Food banks often lack a reliable supply of menstrual hygiene products for clientele because many donors are unaware that federal safety-net programs do not cover these essential health items; and

WHEREAS, Homeless persons, incarcerated individuals, and transgender individuals are disproportionately impacted by period poverty, since they lack the means or opportunity to access menstrual hygiene products easily, if at all; and

WHEREAS, A recent study by researchers at George Mason University found that women who experienced period poverty at some point in the past year were more likely to report moderate or severe depression than women who did not experience period poverty; and

WHEREAS, Lack of access to free or low-cost menstrual hygiene products forces many low-income individuals to choose between purchasing food or these essential health products; and

WHEREAS, Some menstruators, unable to access menstrual hygiene products, extend the length of time that they use a tampon or a pad, or re-use soiled pads, risking infection or even toxic shock syndrome; and

WHEREAS, Other menstruators who lack access to menstrual hygiene products are forced to use potentially unhygienic alternatives, such as diapers, rags, newspapers, or socks; and

WHEREAS, Legislation introduced by United States Representative Gracie Meng (D-NY) that would ensure expanded access to free menstrual hygiene products for certain vulnerable populations failed to advance in the 116th session of the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, Period poverty hinders the academic, economic, employment, and social advancement of too many New Jersey residents who menstruate; and

WHEREAS, Awareness of, and accurate information about, the complex issue of period poverty is a critical tool to ensuring menstrual equity for all of New Jersey’s menstruators; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.36:2-440 “Period Poverty Awareness Week” established, last full week of May.

1. The last full week in May of each year is designated as “Period Poverty Awareness Week” in the State of New Jersey to promote an awareness of, and public actions to address, period poverty.

C.36:2-441 Annual proclamation.

2. The Governor is requested to annually issue a proclamation calling upon public officials and citizens of this State to observe “Period Poverty Awareness Week” with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved May 25, 2023.