

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 121

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 13, 2023

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Singleton

SYNOPSIS

Establishes the last full week of May as “Period Poverty Awareness Week.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/22/2023)

1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating the last full week of May of each
2 year as “Period Poverty Awareness Week” in New Jersey.
3
4 **WHEREAS**, “Period Poverty” is defined as inadequate access to
5 menstrual hygiene products and education, clean toilets, and
6 handwashing facilities; and
7 **WHEREAS**, The average menstruator spends approximately \$9 per
8 month, or \$1,964 over the course of a lifetime, on menstrual
9 hygiene products; and
10 **WHEREAS**, As of 2021, 30 states impose a “tampon tax,” or a sales tax
11 on menstrual hygiene products, making these essential health
12 products even more difficult for low-income menstruators to afford;
13 and
14 **WHEREAS**, Ten percent of New Jersey women live in poverty,
15 according to data compiled by Spotlight on Poverty and
16 Opportunity; and
17 **WHEREAS**, In 2020, 66 percent of low-income menstruators surveyed
18 in St. Louis, MO reported being unable to afford menstrual hygiene
19 products at some point during the previous year, while 20 percent
20 of these respondents faced this problem on a monthly basis; and
21 **WHEREAS**, One in five low-income menstruators reports missing
22 school, work, or events because they lack access to menstrual
23 hygiene products; and
24 **WHEREAS**, Federal statute and regulations prohibit safety-net
25 programs for low-income individuals, such as Medicaid, the
26 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the
27 Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and
28 Children (WIC), from providing enrollees with free menstrual
29 hygiene products; and
30 **WHEREAS**, Food banks often lack a reliable supply of menstrual
31 hygiene products for clientele because many donors are unaware
32 that federal safety-net programs do not cover these essential health
33 items; and
34 **WHEREAS**, Homeless persons, incarcerated individuals, and
35 transgender individuals are disproportionately impacted by period
36 poverty, since they lack the means or opportunity to access
37 menstrual hygiene products easily, if at all; and
38 **WHEREAS**, A recent study by researchers at George Mason University
39 found that women who experienced period poverty at some point in
40 the past year were more likely to report moderate or severe
41 depression than women who did not experience period poverty; and
42 **WHEREAS**, Lack of access to free or low-cost menstrual hygiene
43 products forces many low-income individuals to choose between
44 purchasing food or these essential health products; and
45 **WHEREAS**, Some menstruators, unable to access menstrual hygiene
46 products, extend the length of time that they use a tampon or a pad,
47 or re-use soiled pads, risking infection or even toxic shock
48 syndrome; and

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

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

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

12 **WHEREAS**, Awareness of, and accurate information about, the
13 complex issue of period poverty is a critical tool to ensuring
14 menstrual equity for all of New Jersey’s menstruators; now,
15 therefore,
16

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

19
20 1. The last full week in May of each year is designated as
21 “Period Poverty Awareness Week” in the State of New Jersey to
22 promote an awareness of, and public actions to address, period
23 poverty.
24

25 2. The Governor is requested to annually issue a proclamation
26 calling upon public officials and citizens of this State to observe
27 “Period Poverty Awareness Week” with appropriate activities and
28 programs.
29

30 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.
31
32

33 STATEMENT
34

35 This joint resolution designates the last full week of May of each
36 year as “Period Poverty Awareness Week” in order to promote
37 awareness of, and public actions to address, period poverty. Period
38 poverty is defined as inadequate access to menstrual hygiene
39 products and education, clean toilets, and handwashing facilities.
40 Access to menstrual hygiene products, such as tampons or sanitary
41 pads, is particularly difficult for homeless individuals, incarcerated
42 menstruators, and transgendered persons. Moreover, low-income
43 menstruators frequently have difficulty affording the cost of
44 menstrual hygiene products, since federal safety-net programs, such
45 as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
46 (SNAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for
47 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), do not cover these essential
48 health products. Too often, menstruators are forced to miss school,

SJR121 RUIZ, POU

4

1 work, or important events because they lack access to, or cannot
2 afford to buy, the products needed to manage menstrual periods. It
3 is the intent of the bill's sponsor to promote public awareness of
4 period poverty so that New Jersey's menstruators no longer have to
5 choose between purchasing food or menstrual hygiene products.