

**ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 147**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 19, 2024

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN
District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Urges President and Congress to enact “Poverty Line Act of 2023.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** urging the President and Congress of
2 the United States to enact the “Poverty Line Act of 2023.”

3
4 **WHEREAS**, The federal poverty guidelines, more commonly known as
5 the federal poverty level, are a measure of income issued annually
6 by the United States Department of Health and Human Services
7 which are used to determine an individual’s or household’s
8 eligibility for certain State and federal programs and benefits; and

9 **WHEREAS**, The current method for calculating these guidelines was
10 established in the 1960s and is tied a household’s food budget from
11 that decade, adjusted for inflation; and

12 **WHEREAS**, For most modern American households, however, the cost
13 of food has decreased as a share of expenses relative to other costs
14 like housing, utilities, childcare, transportation, and healthcare; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Despite the federal poverty level’s benefit of providing a
16 nationally recognized income threshold for determining who is
17 poor, its shortcomings are well documented as it is not based on the
18 current cost of basic household necessities and, except for Alaska
19 and Hawaii, it is not adjusted to reflect cost of living differences
20 across the United States; and

21 **WHEREAS**, As a result, millions of struggling families across the
22 country make too little to afford their basic needs, yet because the
23 federal poverty line is so low, they are not eligible for safety net
24 benefits; and

25 **WHEREAS**, According to the 2023 United for ALICE (Asset Limited,
26 Income Constrained, Employed) report, 11 percent of households in
27 New Jersey in 2021, or 368,639, lived in poverty according to the
28 federal guidelines; however, another 26 percent of households, or
29 923,791, were above the federal poverty level but did not earn
30 enough to afford the basics necessities in the communities in which
31 they lived; and

32 **WHEREAS**, In December of 2023, Congressman Kevin Mullin of
33 California introduced the “Poverty Line Act of 2023,” with the
34 support of New Jersey Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman
35 and others, which proposes to update the way the federal
36 government calculates the federal poverty line by accounting for real
37 costs and adjusting for regional differences; and

38 **WHEREAS**, These changes to the federal poverty level calculation
39 would make millions more families across the nation eligible for
40 safety net programs, including Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition
41 Assistance Program, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance
42 Program, which provide critical support to people during times of
43 economic hardship; and

44 **WHEREAS**, Notably, the bill would also ensure that the new
45 methodology is reviewed at least once every four years to determine
46 whether it is still reflective of what households need to meet their
47 basic needs and to identify additional changes needed in the future;
48 and

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1 to afford their basic needs, yet because the federal poverty line is so
2 low, they are not eligible for safety net benefits.

3 The changes to the federal poverty level calculation proposed in the
4 “Poverty Line Act of 2023,” would increase the access to programs,
5 such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and
6 the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provide
7 critical support to people during times of economic hardship. Notably,
8 the bill would also ensure that the new methodology is reviewed at
9 least once every four years to determine whether it is still reflective of
10 what households need to meet their basic needs and to identify
11 additional changes needed in the future. Ultimately, the enactment of
12 the “Poverty Line Act of 2023” would provide that the determination
13 of poverty in New Jersey and the United States reflects the current
14 level of financial distress experienced by millions of American
15 families, ensuring greater access to the vital government benefits that
16 provide the necessary short- and long-term support and stability to
17 allow for economic mobility.