



Bill A1935

Title: “Menstrual Hygiene Products Program”

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Abstract

This bill covers the unknown and taboo topic of period poverty. Period poverty is defined as “the lack of sufficient resources needed to manage menses, such as toilet, bathing, and laundering facilities; general menstrual education or information; and basic menstrual management supplies like tampons and pads.” Period poverty covers the inability to go to school, work, participate in social functions, and therefore the inability to achieve long-term socioeconomic equity because of painful periods or even worse, because of the lack of menstrual hygiene products one has.

Why is this policy important?

- Individuals who lack menstrual products resort to unsanitary temporary solutions which often leaves them with an infection of the reproductive or urinary tract. The impact of period poverty is far more detrimental than people think; in the short term, it causes people to miss school or work, but in the long term, especially low income neighborhoods, it causes women to be completely excluded from socioeconomic success.
- A lack of participation in school and work today results in an underrepresentation in the workforce, positions of power, and financial gains tomorrow.
- Period poverty potentially aggravates the unfortunate reality of the feminization of poverty.

Nature of the Problem

- Period poverty is defined as “the lack of sufficient resources needed to manage menses, such as toilet, bathing, and laundering facilities; general menstrual education or information; and basic menstrual management supplies like tampons and pads”.
- Period poverty encompasses the inability to go to school, work, participate in social functions, and therefore the inability to achieve long-term socioeconomic equity because of painful periods or even worse, because of the lack of menstrual hygiene products one has.
- Period poverty has physical, mental, emotional, and socioeconomic costs.

Sponsors

Lisa Swain, Raj Mukherji, Angela V. McKnight, Shanique Speight, and Sadaf F. Jaffer



What the bill says

- Bill A1935 establishes a “Menstrual Hygiene Products Program” by appropriating \$200,000 to the Department of Agriculture from the General Fund.
- Addresses the provision of menstrual hygiene products to low-income residents of the state, specifically those who are enrolled in federal safety net programs such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- Under this bill, the department is required to award annual grants to food pantries for the purchases and any costs incurred by a food pantry will be borne by the state.
- individuals who are enrolled in federal safety net programs mentioned above will be able to acquire menstrual hygiene products free of cost and The bill also addresses the initiative for the development of educational materials for distribution to low-income individuals as well as information regarding the importance of proper menstrual hygiene products.

Suggestions for action:

- Understand and talk about menstrual equity/period poverty
- Advocate to make products more accessible
- Contact elected officials about the impact
- Reach out to elected school board members- request for the provision
- of menstrual products in all bathrooms.

Incidence of the Problem

- 64% of women with low incomes reported that they had been unable to afford period products in the last year.
- It is estimated that about 1 in 4 women in the US will experience period poverty during her lifetime.
- More than 4 in 5 students in the US have missed class or know someone who has missed class because they didn’t have access to period products
- 14.2% of women had experienced period poverty at some point in the last year, and an additional 10% experience period poverty on a monthly basis.
- The most shameful fact of all is that in America menstrual products are not covered by food stamps or federally funded health programs like WIC and SNAP and according to the US Department of Agriculture, trading food stamps for menstrual products is a **prosecutable offense**.

Status of the Bill:

This bill was referred to Assembly Agriculture and Food Security Committee as of 9/29/22.