

ASSEMBLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 61

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

The Assembly Women and Children Committee reports favorably Assembly Resolution No. 61.

This resolution urges the United States Congress to pass legislation expanding the federal Medicaid program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and any other relevant federal safety-net program to include menstrual hygiene products among the covered benefits for all eligible menstruators. The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has only exacerbated our nation's period poverty problems. Organizations that donate free menstrual hygiene supplies have noted a sharp increase in demand since March 2020, as families have struggled with pandemic-related unemployment, and school closings have prevented young menstruators from accessing menstrual hygiene products from teachers or school nurses.

Pursuant to federal statute and regulations, federal safety-net programs, such as Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC, do not include menstrual hygiene products among the benefits offered to low-income individuals. As a result, a significant number of low-income individuals regularly have to choose between purchasing menstrual hygiene products or food for themselves and their families. Moreover, the lack of access to affordable menstrual hygiene products has a profound impact on young menstruators, many of whom have had to miss school when they cannot afford the supplies needed to manage their menstrual period.

Menstruators who are unable to afford menstrual hygiene products typically use other absorbent materials to manage their menstruation, including toilet paper, paper towels, diapers, socks, and rags. Other low-income menstruators try to extend the length of time that they use a tampon or pad. However, both of these solutions put menstruators at higher risk of infection and toxic shock syndrome.

During the 117th Congress, several bills concerning the accessibility of menstrual hygiene products were introduced in the House of Representatives. Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) has introduced the "Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021" (H.R. 3614), which, among other requirements, mandated coverage of menstrual hygiene products under the federal Medicaid program. Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL) introduced the "SNAP PLUS Act of 2021" (H.R.7271), which

would permit SNAP benefits to be used to purchase personal hygiene items, including menstrual hygiene products. However, these bills are still pending in the 117th Congress.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 2022-2023 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.