Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman SHANIQUE SPEIGHT
District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS
Establishes “New Jersey Feminine Hygiene Products for the Homeless Act.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT concerning feminine hygiene products and emergency shelters for the homeless and supplementing P.L.1985, c.48 (C.55:13C-1 et seq.).

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

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey Feminine Hygiene Products for the Homeless Act.”

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:
   a. Period inequity is a chronic problem due to the fact that the cost of feminine hygiene products, including sales tax, is the same for women of all socioeconomic groups;
   b. This unfortunately leads to hardships and disparities relative to feminine hygiene and women’s health in under-served communities, including for people with disabilities, minorities, and people experiencing homelessness;
   c. Women typically have their menstrual cycles every 28 days starting in their pre-teen years and lasting through menopause, which means they need to buy feminine hygiene products every month of the year over the span of several decades;
   d. The average menstrual cycle can last from between five to seven days, often requiring the purchase of multiple packages of feminine hygiene products for one cycle;
   e. The combination of these factors can lead to astronomical, recurring costs for women in their menstruating years;
   f. New Jersey has exempted feminine hygiene products, such as sanitary napkins and tampons, from the tax imposed under the Sales and Use Tax Act. In doing so, the State has recognized that it is financially burdensome for women to continue to purchase these products;
   g. Many women and girls within New Jersey find themselves in need of temporary housing assistance within emergency shelters for the homeless; and the Department of Community Affairs, in conjunction with the Departments of Human Services and Health, has recognized this growing need by creating the Homelessness Prevention Program and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program;
   h. Women and girls who find themselves homeless still need feminine hygiene and sanitation products to the same extent as all other women;
   i. Women and girls experiencing homelessness should not be burdened with the costs of feminine hygiene products while already experiencing financial and economic hardships resulting in them being unable to afford basic shelter; and
   j. It is therefore necessary and important to create this “New Jersey Feminine Hygiene Products for the Homeless Act” to combat
period inequity and assist women and girls residing in emergency
shelters for the homeless.

3  3. Each emergency shelter for the homeless that serves female
residents shall, subject to the availability of funds in the shelter’s
general budget, make feminine hygiene products, including, but not
limited to, sanitary napkins, tampons, and panty liners, available
free of charge to females residing in the emergency shelter for the
homeless. A homeless shelter’s obligation to satisfy the
requirement of this section is contingent upon the availability of
additional funds in the homeless shelter’s budget that would permit
the homeless shelter to both purchase feminine hygiene products as
required by this section and continue its normal course of
operations.

4  4. The Department of Community Affairs shall adopt rules and
regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to implement the
provisions of this act.

5  5. This act shall take effect on the 30th day following
enactment.

STATEMENT

This act, which is designated as the “New Jersey Feminine
Hygiene Products for the Homeless Act,” provides that emergency
shelters for the homeless that provide services to female residents
will be required, within the limits of available funds, to make
feminine hygiene products, including, but not limited to, sanitary
napkins, tampons, and panty liners, available free of charge to
females residing in the shelter. It is the sponsor’s intent that women
and girls who are homeless not be burdened with the costs of
feminine hygiene products while already experiencing financial and
economic hardships.