ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 133

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 7, 2022

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman SHANIQUE SPEIGHT
District 29 (Essex)
Assemblywoman ANGELA V. MCKNIGHT
District 31 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS
Designates May 17 of each year as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
A Joint Resolution designating May 17 of each year as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” in New Jersey.

Whereas, Poor menstrual hygiene caused by deficient education on this issue, persisting social stigma surrounding menstruation, limited access to feminine hygiene products, and poor sanitation infrastructure undermine the opportunities, health, and overall social status of women and girls around the world; and

Whereas, Consequently, millions of women and girls are kept from reaching their full potential; and

Whereas, May 17, 1912 is the birthday of Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner; and

Whereas, Kenner, an inventor who holds the most patents of any Black woman, was born in Monroe, North Carolina to inventor Sidney Nathaniel Davidson and a mother who is unknown to the public record; and

Whereas, Kenner earned her first patent in 1957 for the sanitary belt, an invention that aimed to prevent menstrual blood from leaking onto clothing, which was a common problem for women at the time; and

Whereas, The Sonn-Nap-Pack Company contacted Kenner intending to market her sanitary belt, but when they learned that she was Black, they declined; and

Whereas, Beltless pads were invented in the 1970s and women stopped using sanitary belts; and

Whereas, Sadly, Kenner has never truly been recognized for her contributions to menstrual empowerment either during her lifetime or even after she passed away; and

Whereas, It is appropriate that New Jersey honor Kenner and her birthday by designating May 17 of each year as “Menstrual Empowerment Day”; and

Whereas, Also celebrated in May of each year, “World Menstrual Hygiene Day” is a global advocacy platform that aims to: promote good menstrual health and hygiene for all women and girls; change negative social stigma around menstrual health and hygiene; and engage decision-makers to increase the political priority and advocate for menstrual health and hygiene at global, national and local levels; and

Whereas, The vision of this platform is to create, by 2030, a world where no woman or girl is held back because she menstruates; and

Whereas, This means a world in which: every woman and girl is empowered to manage her menstruation safely, hygienically, with confidence and without shame; every woman can access and afford the menstrual product of their choice; period stigma is eliminated; every person (including men and boys) has basic information about menstruation; and every person can access period-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene facilities worldwide; and
HEREAS, In order to end period poverty and stigma by 2030, significantly more investment in menstrual health and hygiene is necessary, as well as collective action by people and entities at the local, state, and global levels; and

WHEREAS, It is important that the State of New Jersey join in this collective action by designating a special day to celebrate menstrual empowerment; now, therefore,

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

1. May 17 of each year is designated as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” in New Jersey.

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation and call upon public officials, private organizations, and all citizens of this State to observe “Menstrual Empowerment Day” with appropriate awareness activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution designates May 17 of each year as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” in New Jersey.

Poor menstrual hygiene undermines the opportunities, health, and overall social status of millions of women and girls around the world, often preventing them from reaching their full potential. It is the sponsor’s intent that designating an annual “Menstrual Empowerment Day” will help recognize and promote efforts taking place at the local, State, and global levels to promote good menstrual hygiene, ensure equitable access to feminine hygiene products, end period poverty, and eliminate stigmas associated with menstruation. Designating May 17 as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” will also help celebrate the achievements of Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner, an inventor who pioneered a useful menstrual hygiene product that was overlooked solely because Ms. Kenner was Black. Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner’s birthday was May 17, and so designating the day as “Menstrual Empowerment Day” will afford her a measure of long-deferred but richly deserved recognition.

This resolution calls on the Governor to annually issue a proclamation and call upon public officials, private organizations, and all citizens of New Jersey to observe “Menstrual Empowerment Day” with appropriate awareness activities and programs.