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Northern New Jersey

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**New Jersey Assemblywoman Angela McKnight and YWCA Northern New Jersey Kick-Off
Inaugural Menstrual Equity Tour at New Jersey City University**

Organizers Urge Action on Bill to Expand Access to Menstrual Products on College Campuses

Sept. 14, 2023 (Jersey City) – Today, YWCA Northern New Jersey (YWCANNJ) partnered with **New Jersey Assemblywoman Angela McKnight, New Jersey City University (NJCU) Interim President Andrés Acebo, NJCU student advocate Ashley Igbokwe, and NJCU Speicher-Rubin Women’s Center for Equity and Diversity Director Venida Rodman Jenkins** to launch its inaugural Menstrual Equality Tour in time for back-to-school season.

YWCA Northern New Jersey’s year-long, multi-campus tour spotlights the disparity college students face in accessing period products and works to ease this burden by providing free educational resources and products to attendees. Furthermore, the tour emphasizes the pressing need for action on bill [S3576/A3826](#). This bill would allocate funding for New Jersey's public colleges and universities to provide free menstrual hygiene products on their campuses. However, it has not been brought to a committee vote.

This event launch follows the recent announcement that [New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation requiring all public schools serving grades 6 to 12 to offer free menstrual products to students](#). YWCANNJ aims to leverage this current momentum ahead of the end of the 2022-23 legislative session to successfully pass this bill.

According to a 2021 study by Thinx and PERIOD, nearly 25% of students experience inadequate access to menstrual products. Lack of access to menstrual products affects individuals at increasing rates. In the U.S.:

- 14.2% of college-menstruating people in the U.S. experienced a period of poverty in the past year.
- 16.9 million people who menstruate in the U.S. live in poverty, and of those, two-thirds struggled to afford menstrual products in the last year.
- Nearly 1 in 4 students experience period poverty.

These challenges can impact a student’s ability to receive a decent education and cause them to shun socializing with their peers to avoid the perceived stigma associated with menstruation.

“Returning to college can be an exciting yet disruptive transition period for students settling into a new school routine. For many living on tight budgets, having to purchase menstrual hygiene products adds an additional expense and forces unfair decisions between essential needs like food and clothing,” said **YWCANNJ CEO Helen Archontou**. “The Menstrual Equity Tour is our way of helping ease some of this burden by ensuring all students are provided with basic and necessary menstrual products and resources on self-care, while also letting students know that a solution is possible. Luckily, we have champions in the New Jersey Legislature like Assemblywoman Angela McKnight pushing to close the gap for students and adults who menstruate.”

Archontou also thanked NJCU Interim President Andrés Acebo, NJCU Speicher-Rubin Women’s Center for Equity and Diversity Director Venida Rodman Jenkins, and Ashley Igbokwe for hosting today’s event and their partnership in helping to spread awareness about this important human rights issue facing more than half of our population, especially underrepresented communities.

“When students are in class they should be focused on receiving a good education and not worried about whether they can afford menstrual products. We can do more to support students,” said **New Jersey Assemblywoman Angela McKnight**. “I am proud to join YWCA Northern New Jersey in their mission of supporting women’s health and providing students with these essential products and thank them for their support of legislation I sponsored that will put free menstrual products in our schools so all of our students, regardless of their family’s income level.”

“Access to basic hygienic needs should never be defined or limited by socioeconomic means. Lack of access accentuates the fundamental point that the challenges our students confront outside the classroom every day in their individual lives disproportionately outweigh any challenges to learning faced once in the classroom,” said **New Jersey City University Interim President Andrés Acebo**. “These are challenges that uniquely impact our student population more than any four-year public institution in the state. We thank the YWCA Northern New Jersey for adding a critical voice to this important issue facing our underserved populations, including those of our remarkably tenacious menstruating students at NJCU. Together we will continue advocating for equity and the dismantling of systemic barriers to equality.”

"As we celebrate 50 years of serving NJCU and the surrounding community, we are grateful to partner with the YWCA of Northern New Jersey on this very important initiative to end period poverty," said **Speicher-Rubin Women’s Center for Equity and Diversity Director Venida Rodman Jenkins**. “It is critical that we increase access to ensure our menstruating students have the products they need so they can focus on their academics and co-curricular activities, rather than worrying about their basic needs.”

To learn more about YWCA Northern New Jersey, go to ywcannj.org.

About YWCA Northern New Jersey

For over a century, YWCA Northern New Jersey has improved the lives of thousands of women, girls, and families and is at the forefront of the fight against gender and racial discrimination. We work to build more just and inclusive communities through programs for women and girls, anti-

racism training, and policy advocacy. We operate healingSPACE, Bergen County's only Sexual Violence Resource Center (hotline number: 201-487-2227) and provide year-round child care, and senior wellness programs. YWCA Northern New Jersey serves Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic counties. To learn more, visit ywcannj.org and follow @ywcannj on social media.

About New Jersey City University

New Jersey City University is an institution of higher learning dedicated to the development of our students, our city, our communities, and our state. We are a game-changing force for our students and have been recognized as one of the top colleges in the nation improving their upward economic mobility. Whether enrolled in one of our undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral programs at our three locations, NJCU students have access to an affordable, diverse environment, and an exceptionally supportive faculty. This prepares them to go on to become the next generation of workers and leaders who improve their communities and the State of New Jersey.