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Press Release

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Assemblymember Cristina Garcia: Assembly Bill 367: The Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021 Introduced in the California State Assembly

(Sacramento) – Today, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens) introduced the groundbreaking Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021. Assembly Bill (AB) 367 would make access to menstrual products a human right by ensuring menstrual equity and free access to menstrual products for all Californians. Specifically, the bill would require all schools maintaining grades 6-12, community colleges, college campuses (CSU/UC), and state/local municipal buildings to stock its public restrooms with free menstrual products.

“Our biology doesn’t always send an advanced warning when we’re about to start menstruating, which often means we need to stop whatever we’re doing and deal with a period. Often periods arrive at inconvenient times. They can surprise us during an important midterm, while playing with our children at a park, sitting in a lobby waiting to interview for a job, shopping at the grocery store, or even standing on the Assembly Floor presenting an important piece of legislation. Having convenient and free access to these products means our period won’t prevent us from being productive members of society, and would alleviate the anxiety of trying to find a product when out in public,” said Assemblymember Garcia.

During Assemblymember Garcia’s tenure in the California State legislature, as the self-proclaimed Period Princess, she has been and continues to be a vocal champion and advocate of period dignity policies. In 2017, the Assemblymember successfully passed and had legislation signed into law to ensure low-income schools in disadvantaged communities provide students with free menstrual products. In addition, Assemblymember Garcia led the successful effort to repeal the tax charged on menstrual health products. This effort started an international movement to rectify the discriminatory taxation of menstrual products, which cost Californians born with a uterus over \$20 million annually. As the Legislature returns for the 2021-22 Legislative Session, Assemblymember Garcia is committed to continue the fight to ensure that having a uterus is no longer stigmatized by misunderstanding, bias, or fear.

AB 367 was inspired by the trail blazing actions of Scotland, where Parliament adopted The Period Products (Free Provision) on November 24, 2020. Scotland’s new law declared access to menstrual products as a human right and requires all designated public places to provide menstrual products free of charge to anyone who needs them. “Last year, Scotland showed the world this pioneering policy can be passed, with bipartisan support, and become law. I propose we build upon California’s prior menstrual equity laws by declaring that access to menstrual products is a human right and expand access. Just as toilet paper and paper towels are provided in virtually every public bathrooms, so should menstrual products. It is time we recognize and respond to the biology of half the population by prioritizing free access to menstrual products, and eliminating all barriers to them,” stated Assemblymember Garcia.

The Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021, AB 367, received early support from Assemblymember Garcia's colleagues, who agreed to coauthor the measure. Coauthors of the bill include Assemblymember Laura Friedman, Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager, Assemblymember Ash Kalra, and Senator Maria Elena Durazo.

*"By making access to menstrual products a basic human right, we will assure more than half of California's population that menstruates that a fundamental function of human biology should not be a barrier to positive outcomes," stated **Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens)**.*

*"Reliable access to menstrual products is a concern that nearly every woman deals with. Not having the supplies we need at the right time can impact our work, educational experience, and quality of life," said **Assemblymember Laura Friedman (D-Glendale)**. "It's a major equity issue that has gone without much attention and action for too long."*

*"I am proud to co-author Assemblymember Garcia's Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021 to help champion a powerful message about destigmatizing menstruation and providing free, equitable access to necessary menstrual products to all those who need them," said **Assemblymember Ash Kalra (D-San Jose)**.*

*"In a country where over half the population have periods, access to menstrual products must be a right for girls and women everywhere. No one should have to leave work or school because they cannot afford these basic necessities. The Menstrual Equity for All Act proclaims that biology should never be a barrier. PERIOD!" declared **Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager (D-Los Angeles)**.*

Even before Garcia's Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021, AB 367, was formally introduced, numerous groups pledged its support of the bill and praised Assemblymember Garcia's effort to bring attention to the topic of menstrual equity. Organizations supporting the bill include the student-run California Association of Student Councils, ACLU of California, Black Women for Wellness, IGNITE, Free the Period, The Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy, Division of Equity and Social Justice, Alliance for Girls, Alliance for Period Supplies, PERIOD. The Menstrual Movement, and the National Diaper Bank Network. The coalition of support shared the following comments regarding Assemblymember Garcia's Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021:

*"As a California public school student, I have witnessed firsthand the stress and embarrassment caused by not having necessary menstrual supplies. Without sufficient access to period products, a student's attendance, academic performance, and health are compromised. AB 367 is a crucial step in advancing menstrual equity for all students and Californians," said **Ansley Langham, California Association of Student Councils**.*

*"To achieve an equitable society, we must take into account more than half of the population that menstruates. Women's basic needs should not be economically exploited and menstrual products should be made accessible for everyone," said **Sara Guillermo, Executive Director, IGNITE National**.*

*"Free the Period is a movement of students declaring that menstrual health is a right, not a privilege. If toilet paper, soap, urinal cakes, and condoms are free and ubiquitous, why aren't menstrual products? Instead, students are missing class, risking infection, and living in fear that their classmates might see them bleed through their pants. Requests for free menstrual products to school districts and basic needs centers have more than doubled during the pandemic. The message is clear - the time to #FreeThePeriod is now," said **Audin Leung, Co-Founder & Director of Free the Period**.*

*"The Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy, Division of Equity and Social Justice supports the Menstrual Equity for All Act. Access to free period products for vulnerable communities is a gender equity issue and it affects the wellbeing and health equity for all women, girls, non-binary, and transgender people. California can lead the nation in ensuring that we can finally destigmatize menstruation and move towards a framework of equity that includes the needs of menstruating individuals," stated **Protima Pandey, Director of the Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy, Division of Equity and Social Justice**.*

*"Inability to access menstrual products is a significant barrier for many Californians. Lack of access harms their dignity and exacerbates gender inequities, especially for students, low-income people, and people of color. AB 367 ensures that all students can keep their focus on learning instead of worrying about their periods and that Californians entering public buildings will have access to one of the most basic necessities," said **Ariana Rodriguez, Policy Counsel, ACLU of Southern California.***

*"It is egregious that in the 5th largest economy in the world any woman or menstruating person has difficulty accessing safe period products such as pads and tampons," said **Nourbese Flint, Executive Director of Black Women for Wellness Action Project.** She continued, "Not being able to afford these products can result in the loss of education, wages and other opportunities. This is an issue about dignity and equity and we applaud Asm. Christina Garcia for championing period equity."*

*"Every person who menstruates should have access to the period supplies they need to participate fully in daily life. We applaud Assemblymember Garcia for her leadership in introducing the Menstrual Equity for All Act of 2021. Passage of the bill will not only ensure that menstrual products are as freely available as toilet paper, but also produce an added benefit – a reduction in the number of Californians who struggle with period poverty. There is no doubt that California continues to lead the nation in ensuring all people have access to the material basic necessities they require to thrive," said **Joanne Samuel Goldblum, CEO of the National Diaper Bank Network and the Alliance for Period Supplies.***

*"Period product access is a public health issue, it is an education access issue and it is an economic participation issue. Period poverty is at an all-time high as a consequence of the pandemic, and it is time that California respond to the need," stated **Emma Mayerson, Founding Executive Director of Alliance for Girls.***



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The 58th Assembly District includes the cities of Montebello, Pico Rivera, Commerce, Bell Gardens, Downey, Norwalk, Bellflower, Cerritos and Artesia.