



WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION

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Memorandum in Support

A588-A/S6176: Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal

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OVERVIEW: This bill, A588-A/S6176, will require that the state provide an adequate supply of feminine hygiene products at no cost to individuals in state or local correctional facilities.

JUSTIFICATION: A 2015 report conducted by the Correctional Association of New York (CANY) compiles both quantitative and qualitative data to determine that “ultimately, the cost of providing sufficient sanitary supplies is minimal while the benefit – protecting women’s health and personal integrity – is great” (p. 67). Currently, women in New York state and local prisons face a host of barriers to adequately caring for themselves during their menstrual cycles. As the report indicates, these barriers include the insufficient quantity of pads provided to each woman per month despite the flow of her cycle, the low quality of these pads, a woman’s financial ability to purchase extra sanitary supplies, and the lengths at which a woman must go to prove her medical need of additional state-supplied feminine hygiene products. This lack of access to proper quantity and quality of sanitary supplies requires that women resort to unsanitary and demeaning practices such as reusing pads and using other materials such as newspapers in place of pads.

Being incarcerated is an objectively traumatic experience, and limiting access to essential feminine products further dehumanizes women and their bodies. A woman worrying about being able to properly care for herself during her menstrual cycle is a woman who has less time and energy to focus on improving herself. Providing an adequate supply of feminine hygiene products to women at no cost will enable every woman in state or local correctional facilities to care for themselves in a way that is both sanitary and dignifying.

Supporting this bill means supporting the vision of a world that values women, their health, and their dignity, regardless of her background or justice involvement. Therefore, the Women’s Prison Association strongly supports this legislation.

Please see pages 66–69 of CANY’s 2015 report, *Reproductive Injustice: The State of Reproductive Health Care for Women in New York State Prisons*, for more context as to why this legislation not only supports the health of women but also the dignity of women.