

Somerville School Committee Resolution in Support of the I AM Bill, (H.534/S.2491): An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters and Public Schools

WHEREAS, half the world menstruates, and like all other basic bodily functions, menstruation is not a choice; and

WHEREAS, period poverty is a public health issue, and addressing period poverty can help eliminate economic inequity, educational disparities and can improve health; and

WHEREAS, the federal government does not allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or Women, Infants and Children (WIC) funds to be used for menstrual products; and

WHEREAS, approximately 1 out of 10 women, girls, and other people who menstruate in Massachusetts live in poverty and struggle to pay for menstrual products; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 study by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women (Mass NOW) found over half of school nurses reported students missed class to obtain menstrual products and a quarter of shelters did not distribute menstrual products; and

WHEREAS, the I AM Bill, (H.534/S.2491): An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters and Public Schools, is critical state legislation that will provide free menstrual products in Massachusetts elementary and secondary public schools, homeless shelters, and prisons; and

WHEREAS, the I AM bill is being considered by the Massachusetts State Legislature, and in October 2023, passed the Senate *unanimously* for the second consecutive legislative session; and

WHEREAS, the I AM bill is endorsed by numerous professional associations including the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association, AFT MA, Massachusetts Medical Society Women, NASW-MA, National Women's Law Center, The School Superintendent Association of MA; and

WHEREAS, Somerville women, girls, and all who menstruate have the right to live their lives as fully as those who do not menstruate with access to basic health supplies like no-cost menstrual products;

THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that passing the I AM Bill will help support Somerville alongside all other Massachusetts communities and organizations throughout the Commonwealth achieve menstrual equity; and further

RESOLVED, that the Somerville School Committee supports the passage of the I AM bill this legislative session.