

# Common Ground: June / July 2019 Issue

## Rhode Island Coalition of Labor Union Women notes successful #HelpASisterOutPeriod campaign

PROVIDENCE – Leaders of the Rhode Island Coalition of Labor Union Women (RICLUW) have announced that a recent campaign yielded more than 50,000 menstrual period products that will be used to provide care for 2,000 girls in women of lesser means.

Dubbed the #HelpASisterOutPeriod campaign, the effort was launched in February by the RICLUW with the support of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP), Teamsters Local 251 and the Rhode Island AFL-CIO to raise awareness for women who lack the financial means to purchase menstrual products.

The RICLUW held a press conference with Rhode Island Food Bank Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Andrew Schiff, Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale CEO Kate Brewster and RIFTHP President Frank Flynn to announce the results that will give the girls and women a one-month supply of free products.

Maureen Martin, head of the RICLUW and secretary-treasurer of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, stated in a press release that: “Every day, girls and women in Rhode Island miss days of school and work because they can’t afford the menstrual products they need. Access to period products and supplies is a matter of personal dignity and it’s a genuine health concern.”

The campaign included a GoFundMe page along with a promotional video of women detailing the health and safety concerns that come from a lack of access to period products.

Brewster stated, “Poverty comes in many different forms and sometimes we don’t realize how people are affected by it. At the Jonnycake Center, we strive to offer communities the resources they need to improve everyone’s quality of life. For working women and women in poverty, the inability to access menstrual products when they need them can marginalize them and put them at risk for some serious health concerns.”

Flynn stated, “This is an economic, health and workplace issue. We need to continue raising awareness about menstrual inequality to both men and women.”

Even with this advocacy campaign, Martin stated that there’s so much more to be done. “While this is a great first step in raising awareness and addressing the period stigma, it’s not enough. We know that women of all ages who live in poverty and those facing homelessness can’t afford something to eat – let alone the funds to purchase menstrual pads or tampons. Menstrual products themselves are ever increasing in price and they

are just the bare necessity that a woman may need in order to care for her menstrual health. We are truly grateful and humbled by the outpouring of support, but we have a long ways to go to solve this issue. We can, and we will, end period poverty and the period stigma.”

*For more information about this campaign or to make a donation, visit [www.gofundme.com/helpasisteroutperiod](http://www.gofundme.com/helpasisteroutperiod).*



Maureen Martin, president of the Rhode Island chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and secretary-treasurer of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, speaks at a press conference recently at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, which received donations of menstrual-care products for women in need. At left is Frank Flynn, president of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals. Both unions, and others, helped organized the effort. (Providence Journal photo by Bob Breidenbach, which was also published in an edition of the RI AFL-CIO ENews.)