



January 26, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the over 170,000 members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to vote yes on the bipartisan Building Blocks of STEM Act (H.R. 3397) and support young women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and computer science.

There are significant barriers to gender equity in STEM education. AAUW's report, *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*, and *Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing*, found that girls are deterred from pursuing STEM at an early age. Their academic and career achievements in math and science are negatively impacted by certain environmental and social barriers – including sex stereotypes and gender bias. By middle school, these barriers contribute to girls expressing less interest in STEM than boys. By the end of high school, fewer girls than boys plan to pursue STEM studies in college.<sup>i</sup> As a result, women remain underrepresented in many STEM fields, particularly in computing and engineering, where they represent 26 percent and 12 percent of workers, respectively.<sup>ii</sup>

The bipartisan Building Blocks of STEM Act takes important steps to support the learning and teaching of STEM and computer science education specifically for young girls. This bill directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to equitably allocate funding in the Discovery Research PreK-12 (DRK-12) program to studies with a focus on early childhood with the goal of increasing data on early childhood STEM education. It also calls for the creation of two NSF grants that support research and fund computer science programs that encourage early childhood STEM education for young girls.

This bill will strengthen early childhood STEM education and lead to more effective policies and practices to increase the number of women in our STEM workforce. Growing our STEM workforce is critical to strengthening America's economic competitiveness. In order to meet these demands, we must reduce barriers in STEM and increase the number of women and girls entering these fields. Any serious attempts to build and strengthen our science workforce must include substantive efforts to broaden participation to include women and girls and tackle the barriers they face.<sup>iii</sup> With additional data and research, we can begin to uncover critical strategies toward reducing barriers in STEM and increasing the number of women and girls entering these fields.

I urge you to vote yes on the bipartisan Building Blocks of STEM Act (H.R. 3397) and support increasing access to STEM and computer science for young girls. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting*

*Record for the 115th Congress.* Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7724, or Pam Yuen, senior government relations coordinator, at 202/785-7712 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Anne Hedgepeth  
Interim Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations

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<sup>i</sup> AAUW. (2010). *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*.  
<https://www.aauw.org/research/why-so-few/>.

<sup>ii</sup> AAUW. (2015). *Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing*.  
<http://www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Science Magazine. (2012). *Diversity: Promoting New Perspectives*.  
<http://www.sciencemag.org/features/2012/07/diversity-promoting-new-perspectives>>