



June 27, 2019

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE), a coalition of more than 30 organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for women and girls, including the 15 undersigned organizations, we urge you to cosponsor the Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act (GEEA) of 2019 (S. 1964/H.R. 3513). GEEA would help support the professionals and institutions who are working to achieve gender equity in education.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against people of all genders in any educational institution or program that receives federal funds. Title IX requires recipients of federal education funding to evaluate their current policies and practices, adopt and publish a policy against sex discrimination, and implement grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of sex discrimination complaints. This vital law affects all areas of education, including but not limited to: ensuring pregnant or parenting students can stay in school; protecting equal access to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and other courses for students who are underrepresented in those fields; prohibiting sexual harassment, including sexual assault; prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ people; and supporting equal opportunity to athletics.

Despite Title IX's passage 47 years ago, adherence to the provisions in the law is still far from universal and gender disparities in education persist. Women continue to face serious barriers to entry and completion in many career and technical education programs, stifling their access to many high-demand, high-wage areas of employment.¹ Women's rate of advancement in STEM fields, particularly in computer science and engineering, has stagnated or even declined over the years.² Over 50 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys in grades 7-12 face sexual harassment, and 87 percent of those students say it had a negative effect on them.³ Girls continue to have 1.15 million fewer opportunities to play sports in high school than boys, a disparity that is even more outsized for girls of color.⁴ When students face these barriers in school, they do not have equal access to education.

Title IX coordinators play a critical role in overseeing Title IX compliance and ensuring gender equity in education. By law, every recipient of federal funds for education programs or activities must designate at least one employee as a Title IX coordinator.⁵ These individuals are accountable for ensuring that schools address the full scope of Title IX, and therefore play a vital role in protecting all students from unlawful sex discrimination in school. But many education entities fail to meet the most basic requirement of having a Title IX coordinator in place.⁶ Lack of proper training, authority, and systemic support are persistent hurdles for Title IX

coordinators. Many Title IX coordinators are also unaware of the full scope of their work. In an investigation of alleged Title IX violations at more than 100 schools conducted under the Obama Administration, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) found that many had not designated a Title IX coordinator.⁷ OCR noted that some of the most “egregious and harmful” Title IX violations occur when schools fail to have a Title IX coordinator in place, or when a Title IX coordinator does not have the training or authority to oversee compliance.⁸

In order to help schools implement Title IX requirements, Representative Patsy Mink introduced the Women’s Educational Equity Act (WEEA) in 1974 in order to help give schools the resources, funding, and technical assistance they need to fully implement Title IX.

Representative Louise Slaughter was a staunch champion for Title IX and equity in education, spearheading these issues throughout her tenure in Congress. Despite the evidence of continuing gender inequities in education, WEEA was never fully funded.

Therefore, The Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act (GEEA) of 2019 seeks to address the need for more resources, training and technical assistance to educational entities in order to ensure compliance with Title IX and prevent and reduce sex discrimination in all areas of education. GEEA builds on the original provisions of WEEA by providing support to schools to comply with Title IX.

This bill establishes an Office for Gender Equity in the U.S. Department of Education to coordinate activities within the Department and among other federal agencies. Most importantly, GEEA supports the work of Title IX coordinators by providing the annual training, resources, and technical assistance needed to independently and effectively execute their responsibilities. This bill also authorizes competitive grants to K-12 schools, colleges, local educational agencies, and states to support their gender equity work. Title IX coordinators are a linchpin in addressing gender equity in schools and must have the independence, training, and resources to accurately and effectively execute their responsibilities.

Women and girls have made significant strides in education, yet additional action must be taken to achieve equity. All students deserve an equal opportunity to access education and this bill is a step towards realizing this goal. We urge you to support women and girls in education by cosponsoring the Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act of 2019 (S. 1964/H.R. 3513). If you have any questions, please contact Deborah J. Vagins, Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Research at the American Association of University Women (AAUW) at vaginsd@aauw.org or 202/785-7720 or Emily Martin, Vice President for Education and Workplace Justice at the National Women’s Law Center, at emartin@nwlc.org or 202/588-5180.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Women
American Federation of Teachers
Girls Inc.
Healthy Teen Network
Legal Momentum, the Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Organization for Women
National Women’s History Alliance
National Women’s Law Center
National Women’s Political Caucus
Society of Women Engineers
Stop Sexual Assault in Schools
Women’s Law Project
Women’s Sports Foundation
YWCA USA

¹ National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, *Title IX: Advancing Opportunity Through Equity in Education*, 2017, <http://www.ncwge.org/career-tech.html>.

² Christianne Corbett and Catherine Hill, “Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women’s Success in Engineering and Computing” (American Association of University Women, March 2015), <https://www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation>.

³ Catherine Hill and Holly Kearn, “Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School” (American Association of University Women, November 2011), <https://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/Crossing-the-Line-Sexual-Harassment-at-School.pdf>.

⁴ National Federation of State High School Associations, *2017-18 High School Athletics Participation Survey*, September 2018, <http://www.nfhs.org/ParticipationStatistics/PDF/2017-18%20High%20School%20Athletics%20Participation%20Survey.pdf>.

⁵ Department of Education, “Title IX and Sex Discrimination,” April 2015, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html.

⁶ Jake New, “Title IX Coordinators Required,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/04/27/education-department-reminds-colleges-hire-title-ix-coordinators>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, *Dear Colleague Letter on Title IX Coordinators*, April 2015, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201504-title-ix-coordinators.pdf>.