



October 12, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the over 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to support Title IX by cosponsoring the Patsy T. Mink Gender Equity in Education Act (GEEA) of 2017 (S. 1421).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. It covers women and men, girls and boys, and staff and students 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 student and employee discrimination complaints. This vital law affects all areas of education, including: recruitment, admissions and housing; pregnant, and parenting students; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); sexual harassment and assault; and athletics.

Despite tremendous progress, challenges to equity in education still exist. AAUW research found that 56 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys in grades 7-12 face sexual harassment. Of that number, 87 percent said it had a negative effect on them.¹ Women's advancement in high-demand, high-wage areas, including computer science and engineering, has stagnated or even declined in recent years.² Pregnant and parenting students are frequently subjected to unlawful policies and practices that deter them from completing their education.³ Girls have 1.2 million fewer chances to play sports in high school than boys. Less than two-thirds of African American and Hispanic girls play sports, while more than three-quarters of Caucasian girls do.⁴ These and other instances of sex discrimination affect the ability of all students—male and female—to get the most out of their education. When they cannot succeed, our country is limited in its ability to produce skilled workers prepared for an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

To tackle sex discrimination in all areas of education, GEEA provides additional resources, training and technical assistance to educational entities in order to ensure compliance with Title IX. This bill establishes an Office of Gender Equity in the U.S. Department of Education to coordinate activities within the Department and among other federal agencies. In addition, GEEA supports the work of thousands of Title IX coordinators by providing annual training and technical assistance. This bill also authorizes competitive grants to K-12 schools, colleges, local educational agencies, or states to support their gender equity work.

More than 45 years after President Nixon signed Title IX in to law, girls and women have made great strides in education. Yet despite these accomplishments, more must be done to achieve equity. I urge you to cosponsor the Patsy T. Mink Gender Equity in Education Act of 2017 (S.1421).

To become a cosponsor, please contact Ben Strand in Sen. Mazie Hirono's office at (202) 224-6361 or ben_strand@hirono.senate.gov. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record for the 115th Congress*. If you need additional information, feel free to contact me at 202/785-7724, or Pam Yuen, senior government relations coordinator, at 202/785-7712.

Sincerely,



Anne Hedgepeth
Interim Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations

¹ AAUW. (2011). *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School*. www.aauw.org/research/crossing-the-line.

² AAUW. (2015). *Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing*. www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation.

³ National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education. (2017). *Title IX at 45: Advancing Opportunity Through Equity in Education*. <http://www.ncwge.org/TitleIX45/Pregnant%20and%20Parenting%20Students.pdf>.

⁴ National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). (2016). 2015–16 High School Athletics Participation Survey. www.nfhs.org/ParticipationStatistics/PDF/2015-16_Sports_Participation_Survey.pdf. National Women's Law Center and Poverty & Race Research Action Council. (2015). *Finishing Last: Girls of Color and School Sports Opportunities*. nwlc.org/resources/finishing-last-girls-color-and-school-sports-opportunities.