September 13, 2016

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the over 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to vote no on the Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587) for the lack of civil rights protections and priorities critical to improving opportunities for women and minorities. While we applaud the House Education and the Workforce Committee for this bipartisan effort to address this critical reauthorization, the lack of attention towards accountability and closing gaps in participation and achievement between special populations, but specifically gender, must be addressed.

The Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006 is one of the most important pieces of federal legislation supporting career readiness for secondary and community college students nationwide. As the United States continues to compete in the global economy, the development of a highly qualified technical workforce to meet the needs of business is critical. As written, the Perkins Act takes critical steps to educate, train and support underrepresented individuals for success in the workforce, including nontraditional occupations and women’s entrepreneurship. The law includes key gender equity provisions intended to increase the number of women, minorities, and special populations in nontraditional careers. Access to CTE for all students is critical to ensuring that the U.S. stays competitive in the global economy, to closing the skills gap and to providing access to high skill, high wage occupations that lead to a family sustaining wage. Despite these efforts, AAUW is concerned about the rollback of state accountability and the reduction in required state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funding, outlined in the current bill.

AAUW is concerned with the reduction in required state MOE from 100 percent to 90 percent. It is critical to require 100 percent MOE so that federal funds do not replace existing state spending. The preservation of these requirements would support activities specially focused on addressing persistent gaps in participation in achievement, specifically for women, minorities, and special populations.

Furthermore, AAUW is disappointed by the reduction of federal accountability regarding negotiated target setting and sanctions. The current Perkins law requires that federally funded institutions must work to promote gender equity and holds them accountable for participation and completion rates in programs non-traditional to a students’ gender. Under the current bill, states would set their own goals for participation and completion with minimal input from the Department of Education. The Department of Education would now have to ensure states are held accountable when they fail to meet goals. These changes represent a significant rollback of accountability from current law. We urge you to consider the ramifications these actions have particularly on women, minorities, and special populations. As the reauthorization process moves forward, this concern must be addressed.
As the bill moves forward, it is critical that the conferees add provisions that hold states accountable for closing gaps in participation and achievement between special populations, but specifically gender, before the bill is presented to the President for his signature. We look forward to working with you and the Senate to ensure we can accurately and appropriately evaluate career and technical education programs while holding institutions accountable. If you need additional information, feel free to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Pam Yuen at 202/785-7712.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz
Vice President of Government Relations and Advocacy