



April 9, 2007

Chairman Edward Kennedy
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
644 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Michael Enzi
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
835 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi,

On behalf of the over 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches of the American Association of University Women, we respectfully submit the following comments as you work towards reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. AAUW remains committed to ensuring strong academic principles and closing the achievement gap for all children—objectives at the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act. The federal government has a critical role to play in attaining these goals. AAUW endorses the use of a reasonable accountability system that helps ensure all children are prepared to be successful, participating members of our democracy.

AAUW believes it is possible and necessary to maintain a commitment to high standards and greater accountability in our nation's public schools. However, that pledge cannot be in principle only; it must be accompanied by the federal commitment and financial assistance to make it a reality. As Congress contemplates reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, AAUW supports the following efforts to reform and strengthen the law's goals and improve its implementation.

Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education

AAUW supports promoting and strengthening science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, especially for girls and other underrepresented populations in the fields. By 2010, one in four new jobs will be "technically oriented," or involve computers. However, women still lag far behind in earning computer technology degrees and working in computer technology-related professions. High school girls represent only 16 percent of computer science AP test takers¹ and college-educated women earn only 29.1 percent of bachelor's degrees in mathematics and computer science (down from 39.3 percent in 1984) and 24.7 percent of doctorate degrees in mathematics and computer science.² Overall, women comprise roughly 27 percent of computer and mathematical professionals.³ AAUW supports the following efforts to improve girls'

achievement in math and science and increase the number of women who choose careers in STEM fields.

Fulfill the Need for More STEM Teachers: There is currently a shortage of highly-qualified teachers and an even larger shortage of highly-qualified math and science teachers. Therefore, AAUW supports passing the 10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds Science and Math Scholarship Act (H.R. 362) as a stand alone piece of legislation or incorporating this legislation into the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. This measure will have a great impact on teacher preparation by providing teachers with much-needed professional development and improve student achievements by strengthening math and science curriculum.

Give STEM Subjects and Activities Preference in After-school Programs: While math and science in after-school programs are authorized activities under Title IV, Section 4205, they are not a program preference. Including STEM subjects and activities in after-school programs allows students to explore the field in a supportive atmosphere and enhances student interest in STEM careers. Research suggests that information about the usefulness of engineering to everyday life and hands-on experiences with science, math, and technology helps girls develop a sustained interest in these fields. AAUW supports making math and science activities in after-school programs a preferred activity under Section 4205.

Emphasize Math and Science in Early Education, Not Just High School: Studies show that students begin to lose interest in STEM subjects by junior high school; this is particularly true for girls. Teaching children about math and science in elementary and middle school is critical to not only improving competency but also sparking and maintaining girls' interest in the field. AAUW supports voluntary content standards such as those in the Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids Act (SPEAK) Act (S. 224). These standards cover mathematics and science for kindergarten through grade 12 and reflect the knowledge students need to enter college or the workforce and compete in the global economy. In order to build STEM subjects into all levels of curriculum, schools must have access to a qualified pool of teachers. AAUW supports expanding innovative programs that improve teacher recruitment, training, and retention so that every child learns from a highly qualified teacher.

Ask For a Report Responding to “Rising Above the Gathering Storm”: The timely report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, commissioned by Congress from the National Academies on Science, Engineering and Medicine, states that U.S. advantages in science and technology have begun to erode and discusses the need to improve math and science education. Unfortunately, the report largely ignores the issue of girls and women in STEM fields. Congress should request a follow-up report on how to and what affect increasing the number of women in STEM fields would have on enabling the U.S. to remain a leader in the global marketplace. This will illustrate the important contributions women can make to the fields and put weight behind efforts to increase opportunities for women and girls.

Measure Student Achievement in Science: AAUW supports measuring student aptitude in science as well as reading and math. Therefore, AAUW supports passing the Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids Act (SPEAK) Act (S. 224) as a stand alone piece of legislation or incorporating this legislation into the reauthorization of NCLB. Measuring students' achievement in science will provide schools with necessary information on how well students are progressing and the improvements that still need to be made to enhance achievement. The data gathered from such testing programs should continue to be disaggregated by sex, race, and socioeconomic status. However, Congress must recognize that while testing is an important measure of success, high stakes testing should not be the sole indicator of student competency or a school's progress.

Teacher Training: AAUW supports efforts under Title II, Section 2202 that train teachers to encourage girls and other underrepresented groups to pursue math and science careers. This is particularly important because while studies show that all students start to lose interest in science and math by junior high, the loss is particularly steep for girls at puberty, and results from much different social expectations and gender-based peer pressure.

Reauthorize the Women's Educational Equity Act

AAUW supports the reauthorization of the Women's Educational Equity Act (Title V, Section 5611-5618). This law was first enacted in 1974 to promote educational equity for women and girls, through the provision of funds to help education agencies and institutions meet the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX remains a vital tool in providing equal educational opportunities and WEEA, when used properly, can provide critical technical assistance to schools as they work comply with Title IX.

Include High School Athletics Accountability Act

AAUW supports the inclusion of High School Sports Information Collection Act (S.518) in the reauthorization of NCLB. This legislation would require high schools to report basic data on the number of female and male students in their athletic programs and the expenditures made for their sports teams. Better information can help high schools enhance compliance with Title IX and aid in fostering the continued expansion of athletic opportunities. Unlike colleges, high schools are not currently required to disclose any data on equity in sports, making it difficult for high schools and the communities they serve to assess their compliance with Title IX and the status of girls' access to athletic opportunities. This is important because while girls comprise 49 percent of the high school population,⁴ it is estimated that they receive only 41 percent of all athletic participation opportunities, which is 1.25 million fewer participation opportunities than male high school athletes.⁵ Despite the gains women have made under Title IX, resources for women's sports have never risen to the level of resources allocated for men's sports.

Additional Recommendations

School Accountability: AAUW believes in holding schools accountable for demonstrating that they are meeting educational goals, but we should do so in a way that doesn't create a bigger problem than it seeks to solve. NCLB designates schools that fail to meet AYP as "low-performing," and provides sanctions against such schools. AAUW believes the federal government should offer incentives and assistance to struggling schools, rather than punishment, which only serves to further harm students.

Testing: AAUW urges the committee to recognize that, while testing is an important measure of success, it is not the sole indicator of student progress. High-stakes testing as the sole indicator of achievement is problematic and discriminatory. Other key measures that demonstrate student achievement and progress should be explored and utilized, where appropriate. AAUW joins some 90 national education, civil rights, and religious organizations that have signed a statement to this effect.⁶

Mandatory Funding: AAUW believes in making NCLB funding mandatory at the authorized levels. Recent research by the Center on Education Policy found that approximately 80 percent of school districts said they have costs associated with the law not covered by federal funding.⁷

Physical Education: AAUW believes Title V, Section 5501-5507 should be amended to ensure adequate physical education classes and equity in facilities and equipment access and usage. Over the past 25 years, the percentage of overweight girls has more than doubled; currently, 16 percent of girls ages 6 to 19 are overweight, up from 6 percent in 1974.⁸ Further, minority⁹ and low income girls have the highest rates of childhood obesity.¹⁰

After-school Programs: After-school programs should be expanded, perhaps through 21st Century Community Learning Centers, to enrich the school experience and improve educational outcomes. Only 11 percent of the nation's K-12 youth are in after-school programs.¹¹ However, the demand for such programs is great. The parents of 30 percent of children not currently engaged in after-school programs report they would enroll their child if an after-school program were available.¹²

Bullying and Harassment: AAUW encourages the committee to amend Title IV, Section 4112 to implement strong policies to deter bullying and harassment to ensure a safe learning environment. AAUW's 2001 research revealed that 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys reported having experienced sexual harassment, and over one in four students stated that harassment happens "often."¹³ Also, although large groups of both boys and girls report experiencing sexual harassment, girls are more likely to report being negatively affected by it.¹⁴ A recent National School Board's Association study found that half of those surveyed

reported that they see other students being bullied at least once a month.¹⁵ More disturbing is that almost half of students surveyed stated that they doubted teachers could stop the behavior.¹⁶

While AAUW continues to support the ideals behind the No Child Left Behind Act, we call on the federal government to reform the program and provide the commitment and resources necessary to ensure it will be the effective aid it was envisioned to be for our schools and our children. Until the federal government fulfills its promises and obligations under the No Child Left Behind Act, there will continue to be large gaps between a workable implementation of the law and the realization of its laudable goals. AAUW looks forward to working with members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to incorporate additional provisions that guarantee that no child is left behind in American schools. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 202-785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager at 202-785-7730.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

cc: Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

¹¹ The College Board. *AP Program Summary Report 2006*.

http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/ap06_prog_summary_rpt.pdf Accessed January 17, 2007.

² National Science Foundation, Division of Science Research Statistics. NSF 07-307. 2004 data. http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf07307/content.cfm?pub_id=3634&id=2 Accessed January 17, 2007.

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 11, 2005. <http://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat11.txt> Accessed January 4, 2007.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey 2005, School Enrollment, Table 1. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/school/cps2005/tab01-01.xls> Accessed January 19, 2007.

⁵ National Federation of State High School Associations. *2005-2006 High School Associations High School Athletics Participation Survey*.

http://www.nfhs.org/core/contentmanager/uploads/2005_06NFHSParticipationsurvey.pdf. Statistics computed by Women's Sports Foundation, available at

<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/issues/article.html?record=1017>. Accessed December 20, 2006.

⁶ Olson, Lynn and David J. Hoff. "Framing the Debate" *Education Week*. December 13, 2006. The statement along with the supporting list of organizations can be found at

<http://www.nea.org/presscenter/nclbjointstatement.html> Accessed January 18, 2007.

⁷ Center on Education Policy. *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act*, p. 4. 2006. <http://www.cep-dc.org/nclb/Year4/NCLB-Year4Summary.pdf>

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. "Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999–2002." October 2004. Ogden, C. et al. "Prevalence and Trends in Overweight Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 1999–2000." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 288, No. 14. October 9, 2002. From *The New Normal*, Girl Scouts of the USA.

http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/g_s_key_facts_p1c.pdf Accessed February 2, 2007.

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. "Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999–2002." October 2004. Ogden, C. et al. "Prevalence and Trends in Overweight Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 1999–2000." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 288, No. 14. October 9, 2002. . From *The New Normal*, Girl Scouts of the USA.

http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/g_s_key_facts_p1c.pdf Accessed February 2, 2007.

¹⁰ Koplan, Jeffrey P., Catharyn T. Liverman, and Vivica A. Kraak, eds. Committee on Prevention of Obesity in Children and Youth. *Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health In The Balance*. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, National Academies Press, Washington, DC. September 2004. . From *The New Normal*, Girl Scouts of the USA.

http://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/original/g_s_key_facts_p1c.pdf Accessed February 2, 2007.

¹¹ Afterschool Alliance. *America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America*, Key Findings. May 2004.

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press_archives/america_3pm/Key_Findings.pdf Accessed February 2, 2007.

¹² Afterschool Alliance. *America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America*, Key Findings. May 2004.

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press_archives/america_3pm/Key_Findings.pdf Accessed February 2, 2007.

¹³ AAUW Educational Foundation. *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School*, p. 4 2001.

¹⁴ AAUW Educational Foundation, *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School*, p. 32. 2001.

¹⁵ Hutton, Thomas. "No Right of Passage: Coming to Grips with Harassment and Bullying." National School Boards Association's *Leadership Insider*, p. 1. August 2006.

¹⁶ Hutton, Thomas. "No Right of Passage: Coming to Grips with Harassment and Bullying." National School Boards Association's *Leadership Insider*, p. 1. August 2006.