

**Statement of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education
to the
Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources
Hearing on TANF reauthorization proposals
Thursday, February 10, 2005**

On behalf of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE), a nonprofit coalition of more than 50 organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for girls and women, we urge you to increase access to education and training provisions to allow women access to jobs that will help them attain self-sufficiency in your consideration of any welfare reform reauthorization proposals this year. NCWGE believes that welfare programs should end the cycle of poverty and promote self-sufficiency through education and job training to help ensure that women are not locked into low-wage jobs.

Welfare-to-work research has shown that the most effective welfare-to-work programs combine a range of services such as job search, education and job training, and work experience. Well-known examples include the Steps to Success program in Portland, Oregon; Parents as Scholars program in Maine; and OPTIONS program in Baltimore, Maryland. These programs result in increased job security, higher hourly wages, and greater access to employer-provided benefits than programs that simply push people into the first job they can find.

NCWGE believes that education and job training have been proven to make a critical difference in employability, earnings, and job retention. Only through increased education and job training can women attain jobs that pay a livable wage and stay off public assistance permanently. Single female heads of households with a high school diploma are 60 percent more likely to have jobs than those without, and women with an associate's degree are 95 percent more likely to be employed.

Education and job training will also improve the lives of children of welfare recipients. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 36.6 percent of high school graduates with parents who attained less than a high school diploma enrolled in college in the October following high school verses 54.4 percent with parents who attained a high school diploma or an equivalent, 60.3 percent with parents who attained some college, including vocational education, and 82.2 percent with parents who attained bachelor's degree or higher. Further, growing up in poverty: 1) increases the likelihood of dropping out of high school and never attending college; 2) compromises children's physical growth and cognitive development; and 3) reduces one's physical and psychological well-being as an adult.

Once again, we urge you to increase education and training in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program reauthorization. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Maatz, American Association of University Women at 202/785-7720, or Jocelyn Samuels, National Women's Law Center, at 202/588-5180.