

NCWGE NATIONAL COALITION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION

February 28, 2005

Chairman John A. Boehner
The Honorable George Miller
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE), comprised of more than 50 organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for women and girls, we write to urge you to vote against the *Job Training Improvement Act of 2005* (H.R. 27) for women and girls. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization should work to advance the technical skills and career opportunities of women and girls so that they can attain employment that enables them to achieve long-term economic independence.

More women are working today than ever before. In 2001, 66 million women were in the workforce and represented almost 47% of all workers¹. Yet the majority of women are in jobs that do not pay adequate wages, do not provide benefits such as health care, and are the first to be cut during an economic downturn. Women make up the majority (60 %) of low-wage workers living from paycheck to paycheck². Two out of three minimum-wage workers are women, earning just over \$10,000 annually,³ and many of them are the sole breadwinners for their families.

Many women who utilize their local One-Stops already experience significant barriers to employment. In particular, women who are welfare recipients, survivors of domestic violence, displaced homemakers, single parents providing care for family members, recent immigrants with limited English proficiency, older women who cannot afford to leave the workforce, and ex-offenders need better access to job training. For these workers, access to education and training is key to moving towards the joint goals of ensuring self-sufficiency and meeting the needs of the 21st century workforce.

The intent of WIA was to increase the skills and earnings of America's workers; however, the reality is much different. In fact, fewer job seekers are being served under WIA than under its predecessor, the Job Training Partnership Act.⁴ In addition, a recent survey of over 100 Workforce Investment Boards found that the majority made minimal use of dislocated worker

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age*, November 2003, www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, February 2004, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook.htm>.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Characteristics of Minimum Wage Workers: 2002*, www.bls.gov/cps/minwage2002pdf.pdf.

⁴ Center for Law and Social Policy, *The Workforce Investment Act: A First Look at Participation, Demographics and Services*, March 2003, http://www.clasp.org/publications/doc_WIA_Update1.pdf.

funds to serve displaced homemakers.⁵ And, a nationwide survey of women's employment and job training programs found that more than 60 percent of respondents rated services for women in transition as fair or poor. Only 10 percent rated them as excellent.⁶

Congress has an opportunity to improve upon the current provisions in WIA so that more women, and all job seekers, will have access to the training they need. To achieve this goal, H.R. 27 should:

1. Increase funding and improve training services for all job seekers, including displaced homemakers and women and girls seeking non-traditional jobs;
2. Expand the definition of "displaced homemaker" to include welfare recipients reaching time limits;
3. Increase access to training and support services, such as childcare, transportation, and public benefits;
4. Provide quality career guidance and planning to job seekers that includes a full awareness of career options that lead to high wage jobs with the goal of self-sufficiency;
5. Hold states accountable for the results of their programs;
6. Coordinate WIA services with other federal education and training programs.

We urge you to pass legislation that will assist women and girls in their path to self-sufficiency.

Sincerely,



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American Association of University Women
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cc: Members of Congress

⁵ Wider Opportunities for Women, *WIA Reauthorization: What Local Workforce Boards Say about Services for Women*, 2003, www.wowonline.org/docs/dynamic-CTTA-24.pdf.

⁶ Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, *WIA Reauthorization How to Improve the Workforce Development System for Women*, 2003, www.womenwork.org/pdfresources/ww_wia_survey_results.pdf.