

September 19, 2019

The Honorable Eliot Engel  
Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael McCaul  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul,

We request that the Committee on Foreign Affairs markup H.R. 2153, the Keeping Girls in School Act, at an upcoming Committee meeting this fall. Our community is proud of the strong bipartisan support that the Keeping Girls in School Act has received in Congress since it was introduced by Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL-21) and Representative Susan Brooks (R-IN-5) on April 9, 2019, and we are excited to inform you that 38 Members of Congress from both parties have signed on to cosponsor the legislation to date.

Gender gaps in educational attainment persist in many countries at the secondary level, and millions of adolescent girls around the world who live in poverty lack the necessary support to access a quality education. When girls hit adolescence, they are most at risk of dropping out of school and unfortunately barriers such as child marriage, harassment and violence in schools, and social discrimination continue to keep girls from accessing the education they deserve. Overcoming the barriers that keep girls from attending school will help to fight poverty and advance America's national security interests by promoting opportunities that could lead to more stability abroad.

The Keeping Girls in School Act recognizes the importance of secondary education for girls and highlights the need to address the barriers that the 130 million out-of-school girls face in completing their secondary schooling. The bill emphasizes both access to and the quality of education for girls and requires that foreign assistance programs take a more direct and holistic approach to reducing the specific barriers that keep adolescent girls out of school. Not only is quality secondary education an important way to ensure financial literacy and key life skills for girls, it is the foundation upon which they can grow to become economically empowered women. It pays off at scale, too, and has the potential to add \$92 billion to the economies of low and middle-income nations, cut child deaths by 50 percent, reduce child marriage by 66 percent, and decrease violent conflict by 37 percent.

U.S. international development programs should aim to achieve equality at the local and systemic levels, so that all children—regardless of their gender—realize their full potential. When we invest in girls, the dividends are immeasurable. Adolescent girls who remain in school are more likely to live longer and marry later. Educated women earn higher wages and raise healthier and more educated children. In fact, education has the power to increase girls' future wages by up to 20 percent for every year enrolled. Educated and empowered girls are better heard in their communities. This results in stronger economies, more peaceful nations, and more equitable systems.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of H.R. 2153 and we look forward to working with you to increase access to quality education services for the millions of adolescent girls in need around the world.

Sincerely,

1. Action for Integrated Sustainable Development Association (AISDA)
2. Advancing Girls' Education in Africa (AGE Africa)
3. Advocates for Youth
4. African Cultural Alliance of North America (ACANA)

5. Amnesty International USA
6. Basic Education Coalition
7. Bixby Center, UC Berkeley
8. CARE USA
9. Center for Social Well-Being and Development, George Washington University
10. Chemonics International
11. ChildFund International
12. ChildVoice
13. Clarkston Community Health Center
14. Colors of Connection
15. Expanding Lives
16. Food for the Hungry
17. Forma
18. Friends of Terre des Hommes - Stand for girls
19. Futures Without Violence
20. Girl Determined
21. Girl Rising
22. Girl Scouts of the USA
23. Girl Up
24. GirlForward
25. Girls Rights Project
26. Global Citizen
27. Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation
28. Global Women's Institute
29. GreeneWorks
30. Harlem United / URAM
31. Human Rights Watch
32. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
33. IREX
34. Kakenya's Dream
35. Muslims for Progressive Values
36. National Organization for Women
37. Pathfinder International
38. PCI (Project Concern International)
39. People Serving Girls at Risk
40. Plan International USA
41. Population Council
42. Population Media Center
43. RaHa Solutions
44. Rise Up
45. RTI International
46. Sahiyo U.S.
47. Sanctuary for Families
48. Save the Children
49. School-to-School International
50. Seeds to Sew International
51. Shadhika

52. The Borgen Project
53. The US End FGM/C Network
54. UC Berkeley i4Y (Innovations for Youth), Maternal and Child Health
55. UNICEF USA
56. Vital Voices Global Partnership
57. Women Graduates USA
58. World Education, Inc.
59. World Learning
60. World Vision US