Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 100,000 bipartisan members and donors of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor the Pathways Advancing Career Training Act, which was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). The Pathways Advancing Career Training (PACT) Act will provide states with competitive grants to award to career and job training programs that successfully help women, displaced homemakers, and single parents break through barriers and start careers in nontraditional fields for their gender. These are industries with high-skill needs, and high-wage rewards that represent an opportunity at self-sufficiency for many families. In addition, these industries are frequently high-growth and are already experiencing a skill gap in hiring that will only continue to worsen without programs like those supported by the PACT Act.

At current rates, the U.S. will add over 16 million jobs by the year 2018 that require at least some postsecondary education. We must make creating a well trained, highly-skilled workforce a priority in order to keep up with the global economy. Many of the fastest-growing major occupational groups – those facing a pending skilled labor shortage – are non-traditional for women. These include high-paying fields such as computing and technical fields, construction, installation, maintenance, and truck driving. They just need the right training. Training continues to be key, even as we recover from the recent economic downturn. In order to avoid an empty recovery, we must adapt and help employees move into expanding fields, and fields that pay sustaining wages. For women those fields are often nontraditional by gender. A focused approach to supporting retraining will assure we do not leave families behind as the economy recovers.

To move employees into these nontraditional fields, a University of Michigan study showed that supportive services that seek to make this kind of training affordable, accessible, and encouraged are necessary. In addition, once women enter nontraditional training programs, they often experience sexual harassment and differential treatment in the classroom. The Pathways Advancing Career Training Act addresses these problems by funding programs that provide outreach, education, training, support, and job placement assistance to truly prepare women for nontraditional careers.

AAUW strongly supports initiatives that empower women to become more economically self-sufficient, so they can provide for themselves and their families in a competitive workforce. Our current combination of job training programs through the Workforce Investment Act and the Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act do little to achieve that goal. In fact, in program year 2007, fewer than 3 percent of adult exiters of WIA programs were employed in nontraditional jobs, and among all adult WIA service users the proportion is less than 1 percent. On average, wages for female exiters of WIA programs lag behind wages for male exiters by 20 percent, and WIA service do not appear to have narrowed this wage gap. This trend exists in other career and technical education programs as well. Nationwide, a majority of female students are clustered into training programs that are traditional for women and, as a result, are less able to enter high-wage careers. The Pathways Advancing Career Training Act promotes women’s participation in nontraditional fields, in which at least 75 percent of workers are male. These jobs tend to pay wages 20 to 30 percent higher than traditionally female jobs. When individuals have access to job training they are able to move into well-paying jobs, support their children, build local tax bases, and increase revenue for local business and government.

While more women are working than ever before, many do not have the skills necessary to obtain the high-wage jobs needed to adequately support themselves and their families. AAUW urges you cosponsor the Pathways Advancing Career Training Act (H.R. 2074), which targets women most in need, while helping to build a diverse and highly-skilled workforce. Please contact Leticia Mederos in Rep. Rosa DeLauro’s office (202-225-3661 or

Cosponsor the Pathways Advancing Career Training Act (H.R. 2074)
Leticia.Mederos@mail.house.gov) to cosponsor. Cosponsorships or votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Action Fund Congressional Voting Record for the 111th Congress. If you have any questions, please contact me, at 202/785-7793, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

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