



## Support the American Dream Act (H.R. 1751)

July 15, 2010

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 American Dream Act (H.R. 1751)**, which was introduced by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL). This legislation will allow undocumented students – raised in the U.S. and graduated from American high schools – to go to college, contribute to the nation's economy, and start on the pathway to citizenship.

AAUW believes that increasing access to higher education is imperative for individual financial security and the nation's economic recovery. Under current law, undocumented immigrants wishing to attend college are unable to receive state financial aid in most states, are ineligible for federal loans, and their undocumented status prevents them from legally working to pay for college. The American Dream Act would allow undocumented students who entered the United States before age 16 and lived here at least five years to gain permanent legal status and eventual citizenship if they attend college or join the military for at least two years. Further, these students must display good moral character in order to qualify. In addition, the legislation would allow states to offer these students in-state tuition and these students could receive federal loans upon adjustment of their legal status. This legislation would provide a path to citizenship for an estimated 65,000 immigrants annually who were brought to the country as children, and essentially know no other home.

By the year 2018, it is estimated that there will be 16 million new jobs where postsecondary education will most likely be necessary.<sup>1</sup> As the skill requirements of jobs continue to increase, so too should access to postsecondary education for students. The DREAM Act will enable our nation to become increasingly competitive by building on the home-grown talent of individuals affected by these provisions. In addition, allowing these individuals to pursue higher education benefits our nation. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that on average a worker's annual earnings will double with a college degree compared to a high school degree, and the increase is even higher for women.<sup>2</sup> In addition to increasing personal earnings, a college degree has other economic and social benefits, including increased tax revenues, decreased reliance on public assistance programs, lower unemployment rates, and increased voting, volunteering, and other civic activities.<sup>3</sup>

Again, AAUW strongly encourages you to **cosponsor the American Dream Act (H.R. 1751)**. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730. Cosponsorships or votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 111th Congress.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz  
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (December 11, 2009). Economic News Release. Employment and total job openings by postsecondary education or training category, 2008-18. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t09.htm>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (March 28, 2005). *College Degree Nearly Doubles Annual Earnings, Census Bureau Reports*. Retrieved September 24, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/education/004214.html>

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Higher Education Policy. "The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education." February 2005.