

Cosponsor the College Affordability for Working Students Act (H.R. 3378)

October 25, 2007

Dear Representative:



On behalf of the more than 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women, we urge you to **cosponsor the College Affordability for Working Students Act (H.R. 3378)**. This critical piece of legislation will make federal Stafford loans available to less than half-time students as a part of a demonstration program.

By the year 2014, it is estimated that there will be 12 million new jobs where postsecondary education will most likely be necessary.¹ As the skill requirements of jobs continue to increase, so too should access to postsecondary education for all students.

Our federal financial aid system is designed with the traditional college student in mind, yet part-time and nontraditional students are now considered the norm on today's college campuses. Nontraditional students—those who are part-time, working, older, or parenting—face unique challenges as they seek to finance a college education. A 2002 report by the Department of Education found that nearly 73 percent of undergraduates were considered “nontraditional,” meaning they are older, they may work, or attend school part-time.² In light of the increasing number of nontraditional and parenting students—the majority of whom are women³—legislation must create programs that help these students enter college, stay in college, and earn a degree.

Many nontraditional students only have the opportunity to return to school one class at a time.⁴ AAUW believes such students should have access to financial aid while ensuring that the integrity of the federal aid programs is maintained. While Pell grants are available to students who attend school less than part-time, currently, to be eligible for the Stafford loan program, which offers direct and guaranteed loans, a student must attend classes on at least a half-time basis. Furthermore, in 2003-2004 only 2.1 percent of all Pell Grants went to less than half-time students. The half-time restriction makes over 2.6 million students ineligible for Stafford Loans. While the College Cost Reduction and Access Act included many stipulations that will help all college students, it did not address make Stafford Loans available to less than half-time students. These students still need access to this financial aid.

Once again, AAUW urges you to **cosponsor the College Affordability for Working Students Act (H.R. 3378)**. To become a cosponsor contact Andrew Dohrmann in Rep. Baird's office (andrew.dohrmann@mail.house.gov or 202/225-3536). If you have any questions, please contact me at 202/785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730. Votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Congressional Voting Record for the 110th Congress.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

¹Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Projections and Training Data, 2006-07 Edition. <http://www.bls.gov/emp/optd/optd001.pdf> Accessed December 15, 2006.

² U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. “Special Analysis 2002: Nontraditional Undergraduates.” 2002. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/> Accessed December 21, 2005.

³ Kerka, Sandra. “Financial Aid for Lifelong Learning.” *ERIC Digest* No. 224. 2003.

⁴ Most students attend less than half-time temporarily, and aid to those students may increase their ability to complete a degree program. “Initiative to Aid Illinois Adult Learners.” 2001. Springfield, IL.