

AAUW Capitol Hill Lobby Corps
Pathways Advancing Career Training Act (H.R. 5774)
May 15, 2008

I. SUMMARY

Message: Please cosponsor the PACT Act (H.R. 5774). Introduced by Linda Sanchez, the PACT would provide financial assistance to states for training programs that prepare women for employment in high-wage, high-skill fields where they are often underrepresented.

II. BACKGROUND

The new global economy increasingly demands more high-skilled and better educated workers than ever before. 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's 2007-2009 Public Policy Program states, "to achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, AAUW advocates programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the work force, including nontraditional occupations." It further states that AAUW will actively work to strengthen educational programs, including "... vocational education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development and earning potential."¹

Women and High-Wage, High-Skill Jobs

The sad reality is that women and girls still face significant discrimination and gender stereotyping within fields typically occupied by men, as well as during training programs for these careers. 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. For example, in New Jersey girls represent only 2 percent of automotive students. In Maryland, 14,843 girls are taking child care courses, while only 381 are enrolled in construction and repair and automotive classes. Across the country, girls make up 87 percent of students in traditionally female fields and only 15 percent of those in typically male fields.²

A 12 state analysis based on data from the U.S. Department of Education found that women tend to be overwhelmingly clustered in low-wage, low-skill fields (they constitute 98 percent of students in the cosmetology industry, 87 percent in the child care industry, and 86 percent in the health aide industry). In high-wage, high-skill fields, they fall well below the 25 percent threshold to qualify as a "nontraditional field" (women account for 10 percent of students in the construction and repair industry, 9 percent in the automotive industry, 6 percent in the electrician industry, and 6 percent in the plumbing industry).³

AAUW strongly believes that access to high-wage, high-skill jobs should be a right for women and girls from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, age, and disability

backgrounds, including training for nontraditional jobs. It is in these fields traditionally dominated by men that women workers can begin to close the persistent wage gap between women and men.

Federal Investments in Career and Technical Education

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act funds vocational education programs at secondary and postsecondary institutions across the country. AAUW believes that the investment that the federal government makes in high quality career and technical education is essential to meeting the needs of the nation's evolving high-tech workplaces. The gender equity provisions in the law send the message that career and technical training is critical to ensuring that women have opportunities throughout their lifetimes to develop the skills needed to be competitive in the global economy. Perkins was reauthorized in 1998, and was most recently reauthorized by the 109th Congress in 2006.

History of the Perkins Act

Dating from the 1970's, the Perkins Act contained provisions that were intended to help ensure women and girls had equal access and opportunity to succeed in vocational education. In previous manifestations, Perkins had included programs specifically to help special populations such as displaced homemakers,⁴ single parents, and students seeking nontraditional employment training—the majority of whom are women. The political climate of 1998, however, brought about many changes to the way Perkins was structured.

In order to devolve some aspects of Perkins to states, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. WIA's goals were simple—help workers transition into high-skill, high-wage jobs, and give states block grants to implement programs that meet these needs. Congress believed the “special populations” that had been serviced under Perkins (displaced homemakers, single parents, and students seeking nontraditional employment training) could be better served under the new WIA legislation, as part of the services to “dislocated workers.” As a result, the 1998 reauthorization of the Perkins Act eliminated these statewide “gender equity set-asides” that funded programs for special populations, with the hopes the populations would still be served under WIA.

The problem with this otherwise reasonable logic is that WIA block-grant implementation decisions were left to the states, allowing them to decide how to implement programs and what populations to serve. Without explicit direction from the federal government to fund these programs for women, few states chose to allocate funding. This resulted in program closings and significantly reduced services for women in transition. And so, these special populations have gone un- or underserved since 1998. Between 1998 and 2003, the share of single parents receiving training under the Workforce Investment Act declined from 43.7 percent to 24.6 percent.⁵ In Program Year 2003, only 1.5 percent of dislocated workers provided services under WIA were displaced homemakers.⁶ In PY2004, only 2.9 percent of adult women exiters of WIA

programs were employed in higher-paying nontraditional jobs in the quarter after their exit.⁷ On average, wages for female exiters of WIA programs lag behind wages for male exiters by \$1,000 per quarter.⁸

Perkins IV: The 2006 Reauthorization

The 2006 Perkins reauthorization took some positive steps to ensure that women in transition have greater access to the vocational education system, though it stops short of reinstating the gender-equity set-asides. AAUW is pleased the new law *requires* local programs receiving Perkins funds to support activities that prepare special populations—including single parents and displaced homemakers who are enrolled in career and technical education programs—for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations more likely to lead to economic self-sufficiency. Prior law required only that local programs *describe* plans and programs for special populations. However, this requirement was largely symbolic because it did not *require* that local funds be used to carry out these plans.

The PACT Act

The PACT Act has been introduced the previous three Congresses, championed by former Reps. Melissa Hart and Juanita Millender-McDonald. This year Rep. Linda Sanchez has introduced a bill that has evolved with Perkins reauthorization and strived to close the gender gap in high-wage, high-skill careers. The PACT Act would authorize state grants that would establish career and technical education programs as well as support services around those programs that prepare women, single parents and displaced homemakers – divorced and widowed women re-entering the workforce after extended periods of time at home caring for family members – for careers in underrepresented fields.

- PACT would provide financial assistance to states for training programs that prepare women for employment in high-wage, high-skill fields where they are often underrepresented.
- Allow states to develop and support programs that address barriers to employment for single parents and for displaced homemakers—divorced and widowed women re-entering the workforce after extended periods of time at home caring for family members.
- Funds programs that provide outreach, education, training, support, and job placement assistance to encourage and prepare women for nontraditional careers. Targets those families most in need—female-headed families—while helping to build the highly-skilled, diverse workforce that is critical to continued US competitiveness.

III. TALKING POINTS

- Two out of every three minimum wage workers are female.⁹
- Thirty-seven percent of single mothers and their children and 42 percent of displaced homemakers are living in poverty.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹
- A woman working as a computer scientist or systems analyst—a nontraditional field for women—can earn a mean annual wage of \$54,028, while a woman working as an administrative assistant—a traditional field for women—will only earn a mean annual wage of \$30,368.¹²
- Women are often barred from high-wage, high-skill jobs due to biased career counseling and recruiting. Even once they enter nontraditional training programs, they may experience sexual harassment and differential treatment in the classroom.¹³ PACT addresses these problems by funding programs that provide outreach, education, training, support, and job placement assistance to encourage and prepare women for nontraditional careers.
- 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.
- The PACT Act also benefits American businesses by matching employers with the skilled workers they need to prosper.
- Research shows the effectiveness of the PACT strategy. A multi-year University of Michigan study of low-income women concluded that successful job training programs must directly address women's barriers to employment.¹⁴ Not only offering programs to train women, but also programs to deal with barriers to entry, will impact fields in which they are traditionally underrepresented.

IV. WHAT THIS BILL WOULD ACCOMPLISH

The PACT Act would authorize state grants that would establish career and technical education programs as well as support services around those programs that prepare women, single parents and displaced homemakers – divorced and widowed women re-

entering the workforce after extended periods of time at home caring for family members – for careers in underrepresented fields.

V. STATUS

Introduced 4/10/2008 by Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA-39) and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

There are 26 Cosponsors on 5/14/08.

[Rep Berman, Howard L.](#) [CA-28] - 5/8/2008
[Rep Bordallo, Madeleine Z.](#) [GU] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Christensen, Donna M.](#) [VI] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Cleaver, Emanuel](#) [MO-5] - 5/6/2008
[Rep DeLauro, Rosa L.](#) [CT-3] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Fattah, Chaka](#) [PA-2] - 4/23/2008
[Rep Filner, Bob](#) [CA-51] - 5/6/2008
[Rep Hare, Phil](#) [IL-17] - 4/23/2008
[Rep Hinojosa, Ruben](#) [TX-15] - 4/23/2008
[Rep Hirono, Mazie K.](#) [HI-2] - 5/6/2008
[Rep Honda, Michael M.](#) [CA-15] - 5/8/2008
[Rep Jackson-Lee, Sheila](#) [TX-18] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Lewis, John](#) [GA-5] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Lofgren, Zoe](#) [CA-16] - 5/8/2008
[Rep Maloney, Carolyn B.](#) [NY-14] - 4/10/2008
[Rep McNerney, Jerry](#) [CA-11] - 5/6/2008
[Rep Michaud, Michael H.](#) [ME-2] - 4/23/2008
[Rep Payne, Donald M.](#) [NJ-10] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Serrano, Jose E.](#) [NY-16] - 5/6/2008
[Rep Sutton, Betty](#) [OH-13] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Towns, Edolphus](#) [NY-10] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Watson, Diane E.](#) [CA-33] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Welch, Peter](#) [VT] - 4/10/2008
[Rep Wexler, Robert](#) [FL-19] - 4/23/2008
[Rep Woolsey, Lynn C.](#) [CA-6] - 5/6/2008
[Rep Wynn, Albert Russell](#) [MD-4] - 4/23/2008

VI. TARGETS:

VII. WHO TO ASK FOR:

Education Las

¹ American Association of University Women. (July 2007). *2007-09 AAUW Public Policy Program*. Retrieved December 6, 2007, from http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/upload/2007-09-PPP-brochure.pdf.

² National Women's Law Center. (2005). *Tools of the Trade: Using the Law to Address Sex Segregation in High School Career and Technical Education*. Retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/NWLCToolsoftheTrade05.pdf>.

³ National Women's Law Center. (2005). *Tools of the Trade: Using the Law to Address Sex Segregation in High School Career and Technical Education*. Retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/NWLCToolsoftheTrade05.pdf>.

⁴ According to Women Work!, displaced homemakers are women who have spent years at home and suddenly find themselves needing to enter the workforce, due to situations such as divorce, separation, loss of public assistance, or the death, disability, or unemployment of a spouse. Women Work! (2002). *State Displaced Homemakers Legislation*. Retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.womenwork.org/pdfresources/statedhleg2002.pdf>.

⁵ Frank, Abbey and Elisa Minoff, "Declining Share of Adults Receiving Training Under WIA are Low-Income or Disadvantaged." Center for Law and Social Policy. Retrieved December 14, 2005 from http://www.clasp.org/publications/decline_in_wia_training.pdf.

⁶ 2004 WIASRD Data Book. Social Policy Research Associates, February 2, 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*. September 2007. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2007.pdf>.

¹⁰ "Chutes and Ladders: The Search for Solid Ground for Women in the Workforce." Women Work!, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 2006*. Detailed Tables: Age of Householder, Number of Children in Family, Marital Status, Work Experience for people 16 Years and Over.

¹¹ National Women's Law Center. (2005). *Tools of the Trade: Using the Law to Address Sex Segregation in High School Career and Technical Education*. Retrieved December 7, 2007, from <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/NWLCToolsOfTheTrade05.pdf>.

¹² U.S. Department of Labor. (2006). *National Wage Data, Household Data Annual Averages, Table 39*. Retrieved November 29, 2007 from <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat39.txt>.

¹³ Annexstein, Leslie, "Opening the Door to Career and Technical Education Programs for Women and Girls." *Equity Issues in Career and Technical Education*, No. 390 (2003), pp. 5-16.

¹⁴ Danziger, Sandra K. and Kristin S. Seefeldt, "Barriers to employment for the 'hard-to-serve': Implications for services, sanctions, and time limits." *FOCUS*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2002), pp. 76-81.