

**Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act (H.R. 5894)
Organization Sign-On Letter**

To add your organization, please send your organization name and contact information to: eyates@nwlc.org

Deadline: COB Friday, September 17, 2010

Representative Jared Polis (D-CO) and 16 co-sponsors have introduced the Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act, legislation aimed at improving graduation rates among secondary school students expecting or parenting children. The National Women's Law Center, Healthy Teen Network, and others worked closely with Representative Polis on the development of this legislation.

Below and attached is the sign-on letter (with the list of groups that have signed on to date) to communicate organizational support for the Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act (H.R. 5894). Also attached is a fact sheet and the text of the legislation.

To sign on to the letter of support, please send your organization's name and contact information to: Liz Yates at eyates@nwlc.org. The deadline for signing on is COB on Friday, September 17. If you need more time, please let us know.

Please also distribute this letter widely.

For additional information about this legislation or letter of support, please contact Lara Kaufmann of the National Women's Law Center at lkaufmann@nwlc.org or Bob Reeg of Healthy Teen Network at breeg@nn4youth.org.

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[DATE]

The Honorable Jared Polis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Polis:

The undersigned organizations, which share a strong interest in and commitment to civil rights and ensuring the educational success and well-being of children, youth and families, offer our wholehearted support for the Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act (H.R. 5894). Your legislation will help states and local school districts across the nation to establish and fund policies and practices that are supportive of pregnant and parenting youth, so they can stay in school and graduate college or career ready.

For the first time in over a decade, teen pregnancy rates in the U.S. have increased. Every year in this country, there are approximately 750,000 teen pregnancies and 400,000 teen births. Overall, nearly three in ten girls get pregnant at least once before age 20, and the rates are much higher for girls of color. Pregnancy and parenting responsibilities significantly increase a student's risk of dropping out of school: only half of teen mothers get their high school diploma by age 22, compared to 89 percent of their childless peers. In a nationwide survey of dropout youth, close to one-half of all female dropouts and one-third of male dropouts said that becoming a parent played a role in their decisions to leave school.

These alarming statistics stem from the many barriers that pregnant and parenting teens face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school, such as: discrimination by their schools in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the failure of states, school districts, and schools to excuse students for pregnancy- and childbirth-related absences or to assist them in maintaining academic progress; the challenge of juggling schoolwork with parenting responsibilities; and the lack of access to affordable, quality child care, transportation, and other critical services.

The dropout crisis experienced by this group of students has severe short- and long-term consequences for the economic success and well-being of their families and communities, as well as our nation. Female dropouts are especially likely to be unemployed, to earn low wages if they do get jobs, and – as a result – to have to rely on public support programs. Because the children of dropouts are more likely to drop out of school themselves, providing pregnant and parenting students with the supports they need to stay in school is a critical component to any serious effort to address poverty.

And with the proper resources, this can be done. A few school districts are undertaking effective efforts to engage and re-engage pregnant and parenting students by implementing voluntary programs that provide academic and support services, which result in students' academic success. Providing supports for pregnant and parenting students can go a long way toward improving high school graduation rates, especially because pregnant and parenting students often are highly motivated. In the same nationwide survey of dropout youth referenced above, those who left school to care for a family member or because they became a parent were more likely than any other group of dropouts to say they would have worked harder if their schools had demanded more of them and provided the necessary support.

The Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act will authorize the Secretary of Education to establish a formula grant program to State educational agencies, with competitive subgrants from States to local educational agencies (LEAs) to promote the educational success of pregnant and parenting students. States can use these funds for policy development and training and technical assistance to LEAs. LEAs can use their funds for policy development, training, strategic partnerships with public agencies and service providers, and direct services to pregnant and parenting students, such as academic counseling, case management, child care and transportation assistance,

health and social service referrals, and parenting and life skills education. The Secretary of Education will collect and report data annually on pregnant and parenting students, including their graduation rates, and will conduct a rigorous evaluation of the programs funded by the Act. The legislation will authorize \$100 million for this program for FY 2011 and such sums as may be necessary from FY 2012 through FY 2015.

Representative Polis, thank you for your leadership in working to improve the educational outcomes and financial security of pregnant and parenting students – and, by extension, their children. We encourage other Members of Congress to join in this important effort.

We look forward to the enactment of the provisions of the Pregnant and Parenting Students' Access to Education Act, and further urge Congress to include the bill's provisions as part of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It is critical that Congress take steps in the ESEA reauthorization to provide support for this particularly at-risk group of students.

Signed, **[list below is as of September 10]**

National Organizations

9to5, National Association of Working Women
Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women
American Civil Liberties Union
American Group Psychotherapy Association
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Law and Social Policy
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Community Action Partnership
Equal Rights Advocates
Equity and Inclusion Campaign
End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) USA
Every Child Matters
Feminist Majority Foundation
Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
Healthy Teen Network
Ipas
League of United Latin American Citizens
Myra Sadker Foundation
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Commissions for Women
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Disability Rights Network
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network for Youth
National Network for Youth
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National WIC Association
National Women's Conference Committee
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Public Education Network
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
School Social Work Association of America
Southern Poverty Law Center
The National Crittenton Foundation
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women's Law and Policy Project, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Women's Sports Foundation
YWCA's of the Northeast Region (CT, MA, NJ, and NY)

State and Local Organizations

Alabama

YWCA Central Alabama

California

9to5 Los Angeles Working Women (Los Angeles)

9to5 Bay Area Working Women (San Jose)

Brighter Beginnings

California Women's Law Center

National Council of Jewish Women, California

Restorative Schools Vision Project (Sacramento)

Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment

Tatia Oden French Memorial Foundation

Therapists for Peace and Justice

Colorado

9to5 Colorado Working Women

Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights

Colorado Youth Matter

Youth Services, City of Denver, Office of Economic Development - Workforce
(Denver)

Connecticut

Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.
Covenant to Care for Children
National Council of Jewish Women, Connecticut
Together We Shine
YWCA Hartford Region

District of Columbia

DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Florida

Florida Fiscal Policy Project

Georgia

Justice4Children
9to5 Atlanta Working Women (Atlanta)

Illinois

Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition

Indiana

American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana
Child Care Consortium, Inc. (Michigan City)
Scott County Partnership

Iowa

EyesOpenIowa
YWCA Ames-ISU

Kansas

Cawker City Housing Authority

Kentucky

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership

Louisiana

252 Parenting Net Work, Berean Baptist Church
The Infinity Initiative (Metairie)

Maryland

Generation Hope (Baltimore)
Montgomery County Commission for Women

Massachusetts

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts
Horizons for Homeless Children
Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

Michigan

Ecumenical Senior Center (Kalamazoo)
Michigan's Children

Minnesota

Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting
Pro-Choice Resources
Kids Avenue Learning Center (Faribault)
The Emily Program Foundation (St. Paul)

KOOTASCA Community Action (Itasca and Koochiching Counties)

Missouri

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Associates

Nebraska

Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team

Center for People in Need (Lincoln)

New Mexico

Prosperity Works (Albuquerque)

New Jersey

Education Law Center

National Council of Jewish Women, NJ State Public Affairs Network

New York

Brooklyn Young Mothers' Collective (Brooklyn)

Creative Alternatives of New York

Inwood House (New York City)

NY Universal Living Wage Warriors

SNAP Long Island (Patchogue)

YWCA of Binghamton & Broome County

YWCA of Brooklyn

YWCA Elmira & the Tiers

YWCA of the Greater Region, Inc.

YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County (Rochester and Monroe Counties)

North Carolina

Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of North Carolina

Ohio

Ohio Poverty Law Center

YWCA of Greater Cincinnati

Pennsylvania

Education Law Center

National Organization for Women, Ni-Ta-Nee

PathWays PA

Pennsylvania NOW, Inc.

Public Citizens for Children and Youth

Women's Law Project (Philadelphia)

YWCA Lancaster

Rhode Island

Education Justice Council

Rhode Island Alliance

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Westbay Community Action

YWCA of Northern Rhode Island (Woonsocket)

Tennessee

American Association of University Women, Tennessee

Washington

Harrington House, Catholic Community Services

New Horizons High School (Pasco)

Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights (POWER)
Vancouver Public Schools Teen Parent Program (Vancouver)

Wisconsin

9to5 Milwaukee Working Women (Milwaukee)
St. Matthew Justice & Human Concerns Committee

Virginia

JustChildren Program, Legal Aid Justice Center
People Incorporated of Virginia

Individuals

Theresa A. Edwards
Justice4Children, GA

Kendra Huard Fershee
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University of North Dakota School of Law

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Bronx, NY

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West Virginia

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