

## Women and Education

Compiled by Jina Dhillon, JD, MPH. President of NC Women United

Based on information from the National Coalition for Women & Girls in Education

(<http://www.ncwge.org>) and the HERvotes national campaign (<http://hervotes.org/top-12-advances-at-risk/>).

Equal access to education and training opportunities for women and girls is vital to ensuring the advancement of women in many areas, including business, the professions, academics, sports and public leadership. Educational policies must meet the needs of women and girls at all stages of their life, and regardless of the race or socioeconomic status. Significant barriers to equal educational opportunities exist, with federal programs and initiatives aimed at restoring equality often remaining significantly underfunded.

Dropout rates for elementary and secondary education present alarming figures for young girls, with one in four girls overall not finishing high school, with girls of color being especially more likely to drop out before completing high school. Female dropouts are more likely to suffer economic consequences that affect not only themselves but their families and the national economy, as they are less likely to gain steady employment.

Opportunities to attend and finish college are also crucial for young women. It is estimated that by 2014, nearly 12 million new jobs will likely require postsecondary education. Loan forgiveness programs and subsidized education programs are vital for low-income women. Furthermore, female college students are more likely to face barriers to college access and retention. This is especially true for female students who are pregnant or parenting and thus have unique needs, including a greater likelihood of attending school part-time and facing extra expenses like childcare.

Economic self-sufficiency is a critical goal behind educational policies for women, and all women should have equal opportunities to explore, enroll, and remain enrolled, in education and training programs, including for nontraditional and other high skill/high wage employment opportunities.

### What is at Stake

- Federal policies that support equal access and opportunities to education, as well as addressing the alarming female dropout rates, should be promoted.
- Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs or activities, and it greatly expands equal access to college education, professional and graduate schools and sports opportunities. Title IX also plays a critical role in increasing gender equity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education by promoting the advancement of women in these fields.
  - Federal budget cuts, regulations, private school voucher programs, and pressure from opponents are all threatening to weaken enforcement of Title IX. Harmful regulations that can undermine sex equality under Title IX should be defeated, with emphasis placed on restoring funding for programs and policies that advance women's opportunities and status by promoting access to equal education.