



Girls Incorporated®
Washington Office

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 412
Washington, DC 20036-5541
Tel: (202) 463-1881
Fax: (202) 463-8994
www.girlsinc.org

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization Recommendations



Inspiring all girls
to be strong,
smart, and boldSM

As one of the nation's premier providers of afterschool and informal educational programs, Girls Inc. offers the following recommendations for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act).

- **Promote girls' interest and success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).** Girls and young women clearly have the intellectual capacity and drive to excel in these critical fields. Unfortunately, research shows that girls' interest and confidence in these subjects erode during their middle school years. By the time they reach college, women earn only 20% of bachelors degrees in engineering and physics, and a decreasing share of bachelors degrees in computer science. Girls Inc. recommends increased investment in informal science education, such as that offered in afterschool programs. These programs, especially gender-specific programs, have the capacity to be more flexible, creative, and hands-on than school day classes, and can feature female role models and field trips designed to inspire girls' interest and confidence in these vital fields. Girls Inc. also supports measures to ensure STEM classroom environments free of harassment.
- **Increase federal support for afterschool programs—on and off campus—including those with outcomes beyond academic achievement.** All students, especially those who are not responding to the offerings of the regular school day, can benefit from afterschool activities that offer a change of venue and approach. Unfortunately, afterschool dollars are still scarce, and, in some communities, may not be reaching experienced, proven providers (roughly 90% of centers/sites are located in schools). Structured, high quality afterschool programs have been shown to improve students' conduct and work habits, improve test scores, increase feelings of safety, and reduce risky behavior that would otherwise interfere with students' ability to learn and stay in school. Girls Inc. respectfully recommends continuing to work on a balance and partnership between schools and CBOs; increased funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Sec. 4206); and adding financial literacy, civic engagement/leadership, sports, and parent outreach to the list of authorized local activities (Sec. 4205). Finally, Girls Inc. suggests giving states explicit flexibility to allow successful local grantees to apply for continued funding.



- **Support physical education and opportunities for physical activity.** Local Girls Inc. affiliates prioritize structured sports and physical activity to foster lifelong health and fitness and compensate for societal messages that suppress girls' interest and confidence in sports. Girls of color have particularly high levels of inactivity and are less likely to participate in athletics than white girls. Over half of Girls Inc. affiliates have gymnasiums in their centers for the girls' use, and many have athletic fields as well. Girls Inc. recommends increasing the authorization for the Carol M. White Physical Education Program to \$100 million, and adding "Girls Inc." to the list of suggested authorized recipients (Sec. 5503(a)) for Carol White funds.
- **The High School Athletics Accountability Act (HR 901/S 518).** The number of girls playing high school sports has risen from 280,000 in 1972 to 2.9 million today. However, girls and young women continue to be shortchanged in facilities, expenditures, and overall participation opportunities. Girls Inc. supports passage of HR 901 (independently or as part of this reauthorization) to improve availability of public data on high school athletics programs so that students, parents, and advocates can work to ensure fairness in sports opportunities.
- **Safe Learning Environment.** Both girls and boys contend with unacceptable rates of harassment and bullying in school. According to a recent AAUW study, a majority of students (63% of girls and 56% of boys) experience school-based sexual harassment often or occasionally. In addition to the emotional consequences, students reported not talking as much in class (24%); finding it hard to pay attention in school (20%); and staying home from school or cutting a class (16%) because of the harassment. Girls Inc. recommends that the reauthorization view sexual harassment and bullying as part of a continuum of violence that must be affirmatively addressed via policies, grievance procedures, and training of staff.

For more than 140 years, Girls Inc. has brought vital afterschool and summer programs—in math and science, sports, financial literacy, media literacy, health, leadership, and safety—to girls throughout the country. Girls Inc. affiliates operate in over 300 cities, in sites that include Girls Inc. centers, community centers, public housing, churches, and nearly 1,000 schools. Seventy-one percent of the girls we serve are girls of color; 71 percent come from families earning \$25,000 or less; and almost half are from single-parent households. Our research-based programs help girls develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become successful, independent, contributing members of society.

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