Keeping Girls in School Act

The Keeping Girls in School Act (H.R.2153/S.1071) was introduced by Representative Frankel (D-FL) and Representative Brooks (R-IN) in the House and Senator Shaheen (D-NH) and Senator Murkowski (R-AK) in the Senate. This bipartisan bill is designed to ensure that U.S. foreign assistance addresses the barriers that keep more than 130 million girls ages 6-17 globally who should be in school from enrolling, attending, and graduating. As the legislation notes, there are myriad obstacles facing girls in accessing education, such as child marriage, safety in and on the way to school, and harmful social norms that prioritize boys’ education over that of girls’. This legislation brings critical attention to the barriers girls face in accessing education, particularly those barriers faced at the secondary level, a time when adolescent girls are most at risk of dropping out of school. Choices made in adolescence have life-long consequences. A girl who is able to remain in a quality educational setting and complete secondary school is much more likely to delay the age at which she is married, have children, and is better able to participate in economic opportunities that will strengthen her future well-being.

BACKGROUND

The Keeping Girls in School Act focuses on closing the gender gap for adolescent girls and keeping them in school at the secondary level, a time when girls are most at risk of dropping out of school due to forced marriage, pregnancy, and other family pressures. The economic benefits of girls’ education are substantial and can help lift households, communities and nations out of poverty. Keeping girls in secondary school could*:

- Add $92 billion to the economies of low and middle-income nations;
- Cut child deaths by 50%;
- Reduce child marriage by 66%;
- Decrease violent conflict by 37%; and
- Increase girls’ future wages by up to 20% for every year enrolled.

Specifically, the Keeping Girls in School Act:

- Outlines and highlights a non-exhaustive list of 14 barriers that girls face in entering and remaining in secondary education institutions.
- Authorizes a budget neutral funding mechanism where USAID is directed to enter into results-based financing and/or traditional grant project proposals to reduce these barriers adolescent girls face. These proposals will utilize public-private partnerships, development impact bonds, and other innovative financing mechanisms to leverage real results with measurable outcomes.
- Requires that the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls be reviewed and updated every 5 years.

*Statistics are according to UNESCO, the Education Policy and Data Center, CARE, the Global Partnership for Education, and the World Bank.
No matter their background, girls have the power to transform themselves, their communities, and the world around them. Girl Up is a global movement of empowered young women leaders who defend gender equality. Through leadership development training, Girl Up gives girls the resources and platform to start a movement for social change wherever they are. For those who stand with us in this movement, there is no rest until we achieve equal rights for every girl. Because when girls rise, we all rise. Girl Up was founded by the United Nations Foundation in 2010 and continues to work across a global community of partners to achieve gender equality worldwide.