



Attachment 5

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February 21, 2018

To: Sen. Dean Mortimer, Chairman
Sen. Steven Thayn, Vice Chairman
Members of the Senate Education Committee

FROM: Julie Custer, Co-President
AAUW Idaho

Re: Testimony in Support of S1279

Chairman Mortimer and Committee Members,

My name is Julie Custer and I'm co-president of the American Association of University Women of Idaho (AAUW-Idaho). I am speaking to you today on behalf of AAUW Idaho in support of Senate Bill 1279.

AAUW is a nationwide organization that was founded in 1881 by 17 college-educated women who wanted to make it easier for women to get a college degree. AAUW advocates increased access to higher education, especially for women in poverty. We promote equitable efforts to close the persistent achievement gap that disproportionately affects low-income children and students from minority communities.

AAUW, which is recognized nationally for the quality of its research, published its first research report in 1885. This report established that, contrary to popular belief, attending college did not hinder a woman's ability to bear children.

AAUW awarded its first fellowship in 1888. AAUW now awards about \$4,000,000 a year globally in fellowships and grants to women pursuing a college education. Since 2004, AAUW has provided nine fellowships and grants to scholars and community organizations in Idaho. Each award averaged almost \$17,000. And each of the six AAUW branches in Idaho provides at least one scholarship a year to a woman pursuing a college education. Sadly, this is not nearly enough to meet the financial needs of women who want to go back to school, but can't afford it.



When the Adult Postsecondary Completion Scholarship (House Bill 190) was presented last year, opponents of the bill said the scholarship would essentially reward college dropouts. I find the word “dropout” to be somewhat pejorative.

I am one of those people who would have benefited from an Idaho Opportunity Scholarship. Like many young people, I started college the fall after I graduated from high school. However, I had to “go on hiatus” after four semesters because I could no longer afford the tuition on my minimum wage job. At the time, I had no other financial options available. Thirty years later I was able to qualify for education aid from my employer and complete my undergraduate degree. Had a scholarship like this been available, I might have been able to complete my degree years earlier and advance more quickly in my career.

AAUW Idaho respectfully requests that you vote “Yes” on Senate Bill 1279 to expand the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship and make it available to more adult students. Thank you.