



December 23, 2020

Dear members of the Biden President-elect Transition Team:

On behalf of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), we would like to offer our commitment and expertise regarding promoting diversity and access in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields for women and girls to help advance the President-Elect Biden's policy landing teams. With over 42,000 members globally, SWE advocates for public policies that promote equity in research and the classroom, foster excellence and access to quality opportunities in the workforce and ensure that women and girls graduating high school and college leave with the skills and knowledge that support success in their professional, academic and personal aspirations. SWE knows that it is critical to our nation's future that all hands be on deck to innovate the next advances in science and technology that support this nation's return to a thriving economy and defeating this pandemic. Enabling historically underrepresented students, including girls of all backgrounds, to compete in the global economy requires a strong federal commitment to access and funding for high quality STEM education along with a focus on workforce training and research programs that value and promote representation and work opportunities across the STEM pipeline. To those ends, throughout the 116th Congress, SWE has supported legislation such as:

- Vice President-Elect Harris' *21st Century STEM for Girls and Underrepresented Minorities Act* would provide grants to encourage girls to pursue STEM fields through tutoring, mentoring, afterschool, summer and other learning opportunities;
- the *Building Blocks of STEM Act*, which became law and modifies several National Science Foundation programs that provide grants to institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations to support science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education research focused on early childhood;
- the *STEM Opportunities Act of 2019*, which improves data collection to further implement evidence-based policies and directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House to promote the progress of women and underrepresented persons in STEM fields;
- the *STEM RESTART Act*, which provides funding to small and medium-sized STEM businesses to offer paid internships or other returnships so that individuals, particularly those underrepresented in STEM, can return to the workforce in positions above entry level; and
- the *Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act* and its goal of addressing sexual harassment in STEM fields by supporting sexual harassment research and efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment.

SWE will continue to support these priorities in the next Congress and hopes the incoming administration will work with the legislative branch to ensure these policies can have the greatest positive impact for our nation's STEM education and workforce. Additionally, SWE urges the transition team to work towards the following goals to improve diversity, equity, and access for women and girls seeking a career in STEM.



Expand the STEM pipeline, especially targeting women and minorities, by increasing the number of students who pursue STEM coursework.

Moreover, SWE supports the [Biden-Harris administration's focus](#) on policies that will help women and girls achieve greater access to the STEM fields, such as increasing access to college and career pathways, investing in workforce training and apprenticeships at community colleges and MSI's that have historically been under-resourced, and (K12). In addition to funding these programs and institutions, SWE will continue to urge the next administration to support revisions to the *Higher Education Act* that preserve a strong Teacher Quality Partnership program, which is important to innovations in teacher preparation, especially as schools deal with the stressors of education during the coronavirus pandemic. Enlarging America's talent pool through the recruitment, training, and retention of STEM teachers along with the distribution of STEM resources via robust funding for Title II and Title IV programs in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* must be a priority for the Department of Education;

Keep Schools and the Workplace Free of Gender-Based Harassment

SWE also hopes the incoming administration maintains its focus on protecting women and girls so that they can thrive at school and in the workplace. Our organization is on the record decrying the rollback of Title IX and Clery Act protections and supports the President-Elect restoring and improving upon the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter Guidance. Expanding training and data collection to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence at college campuses and K-12 schools is a step back in the right direction for women and girls to feel safe and thrive. The administration must also support adequate, robust funding for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights as the primary office responsible for enforcing Title IX compliance at schools and universities across the country.

Promote Equal Pay and Equitable Benefits for Women and Families

Next, the incoming administration must prioritize early childhood, caregiving, and paid family leave benefits to help working women stay or return to the STEM fields. While times have changed, many women remain the central caregiver for their families, thus leaving them with difficult decisions that hinder career trajectory and life earnings in order to support a family. While the Biden-Harris team has shown interest in ensuring access to [high-quality affordable child care](#), 12 weeks of paid family leave for all workers, and equal pay for women of backgrounds should also be a priority for Biden-Harris team.

Expand Work-Based Learning and Research that Promote STEM Careers

Our organization knows that women can lead the way at all levels of STEM education and the workforce but must be given the chances to do so. A better and more robust STEM workforce requires diversity and leadership from all walks of life. That is why SWE supports new initiatives such as the STEM RESTART Act, which amends WIOA to provide returnships to women seeking to return to the workforce. SWE believes that it is critical to expand on apprenticeships, returnships, and other creative industry partnerships that give both new and former STEM professionals opportunities for hands-on learning that leads to a career.

We understand this is a busy period for the Transition Team, and we look forward to serving as a resource in the coming weeks. We would be happy to meet virtually with your staff to talk through our organizations' work and additional ideas we believe will ultimately contribute to the success of our nation's children and families. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or our federal representatives Della Cronin (dcronin@bosepublicaffairs.com) and Russell Armstrong (rarmstrong@bosepublicaffairs.com) at any time.



Sincerely,

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