

# GIRLS LEADERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT, AGENCY, AND DEVELOPMENT (LEAD) ACT

*The Girls LEAD Act complements Congress' recent efforts to combat the underrepresentation of women at all levels of public sector decision-making by addressing the civic involvement and leadership of adolescent girls, an area where there is currently a gap in U.S. foreign assistance programming.*

## **QUICK FACTS:**

- Despite comprising more than 50 percent of the world's population, women are underrepresented at all levels of public sector decision-making. At the current rate, it will take more than 100 years to achieve gender parity in political participation.
- Adolescence is a critical period in a girl's life and it is a time when they are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, child, early, and forced marriage, and other forms of gender-based violence, which are detrimental to their futures.
  - The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed nearly 743 million girls around the world out of school, on top of the approximately 132,000,000 adolescent girls between the age of 6 and 17 are out of school.
  - The economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are projected to put an additional 2.5 million girls at risk of child marriage between 2020 and 2025, in addition to the 12,000,000 adolescent girls under 18 who will marry annually.
  - Globally, every 10 minutes, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence.
- Adolescents who participate actively in their community from early on are more likely to become engaged citizens and voters. Their safe, meaningful, and appropriate participation is key to creating democratic societies with informed and engaged citizens.

## **THE GIRLS LEAD ACT WOULD:**

- **Improve U.S. Strategies** - Establishes U.S. policy to promote the support and empowerment of adolescent girls and directs the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to create a strategy on strengthening the participation of adolescent girls in democracy, human rights, and governance.
- **Strengthening Programming** - Directs the Department of State and USAID to implement programming designed to strengthen the civic and political participation of girls and to prioritize funding made available to the agencies in accordance with the strategies and policies established by this legislation.
- **Reporting Requirements** - Requires annual reporting to ensure progress on the new policy and strategy.

**Supporters:** The following non-governmental organizations have endorsed this legislation - *ChildFund International, Save the Children, National Association Social Workers, International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL), Kakenya's Dream, Church World Service, Futures Without Violence, Global Campaign for Education – US, The Hunger Project, and The Borgen Project.*

For more information or to cosponsor *The Girls LEAD Act*, please contact Hannah Hudson in Senator Susan Collins' (R-ME) office at [Hannah\\_Hudson@collins.senate.gov](mailto:Hannah_Hudson@collins.senate.gov) or Corinne Paul in Senator Ben Cardin's (D-MD) office at [Corinne\\_Paul@cardin.senate.gov](mailto:Corinne_Paul@cardin.senate.gov).