

AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

August 28, 2019

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hirono,

The Association for Women in Science (AWIS) applauds and supports the Inventor Diversity for Economic Advancement (IDEA) Act of 2019. We believe this bipartisan effort is an important step to increasing gender equity and diversity in the patenting process.

As the leading organization for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), AWIS understands the role of unearned barriers in women's participation in STEM disciplines. These barriers can be amplified for inventors. For example, while women collectively account for half of all STEM graduate degree recipients, according to the U.S. Patent and Trade Office (USPTO), they only represent 12% of all inventors.

Left unaddressed, this gender gap not only raises fairness concerns, but is also an economic issue. By increasing opportunities and removing unearned barriers for marginalized inventors and improving participation in the patenting process, research suggests we will foster economic growth. As evidenced by the National Bureau of Economic Research, eliminating the gender gap in patenting for those with science and engineering degrees can lead to an increase in GDP per capita by 2.7%.

By facilitating data collection, reporting, and transparency, while masking individual inventor demographics in the application review process, the IDEA Act of 2019 takes important strides toward improving equity and participation in the patenting process for all inventors.

AWIS, founded in 1971, is the leading organization that advocates on behalf of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to achieve business growth, social change, and innovation. We are dedicated to driving excellence in STEM by achieving equity and full participation of women in all disciplines and across all employment sectors. AWIS is a global network with 80 grassroots chapters and affiliates connecting more than 100,000 professionals in STEM with members, allies and supporters worldwide.

AWIS thanks you, Senator Tillis, and Representatives Velazquez and Stivers for leading this bipartisan effort.

Sincerely,

Sandra W. Robert, CAE
CEO, AWIS

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1667 "K" Street, NW • Washington, DC 20006 • Tel: 703.894.4490
Email: awis@awis.org • www.awis.org • Twitter: @AWISnational