



Independent Women Supports The Freedom Of Association In Higher Education Act

April 2, 2025

Dear Senators,

Independent Women, which fights to enhance people's freedom, opportunities, and opportunities, is proud to support the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act, introduced by Senator Jim Banks.

The Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to uphold freedom of association protections for students on college campuses. In 2016, Harvard University changed its policy to penalize students who join single-sex organizations. The policy, implemented with the Freshmen class of 2017, barred any undergraduate student who joins an "unrecognized" single-sex social organization, like a sorority or a fraternity, from holding a campus leadership position (such as the captain of a sports team) or from receiving College endorsement for fellowships or scholarships (such as the Rhodes Scholarship).

At the time, Harvard administrators argued this policy change was necessary to combat the "**deeply misogynistic**" behavior of off-campus, all-male social groups and protect female students from sexual assault. Not only was this misguided policy based on pernicious gender stereotypes, it also ignored Harvard's own internal survey, which found that **87%** of sexual assaults took place in dorms, not single-sex clubs.

Almost all of Harvard's sororities disbanded as a result of this policy, denying the women of Harvard access to mentoring and networking opportunities. The dissolution of single-sex organizations can have many drawbacks for young women. All-female organizations provide their members with leadership, philanthropic, and networking opportunities. In fact, many of our nation's most accomplished women **business leaders** and **elected officials** belonged to sororities.

After realizing that they were likely to lose a lawsuit brought in 2018 by a group of single-sex organizations, including the sororities Kappa Alpha Theta and Kappa Kappa Gamma, Harvard finally rescinded this controversial policy in 2020.

Harvard's policy raised serious freedom of association concerns. The decision to penalize students who join single-sex organizations violates basic principles of free association and results in disproportionate harm to female students. The Freedom of Association In Higher Education Act guarantees that college campuses can never again implement these unfair sanctions nor deny students of their right to associate freely.

Independent Women thanks Senator Banks for his leadership on this important issue and urges all senators to work toward the swift passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie Lukas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carrie Lukas
Vice President
Independent Women's Voice