**Template Letter to the Editor**

For assistance with placement, contact [beckera@aauw.org](mailto:beckera@aauw.org)

See AAUW’s LTE guide: <http://www.aauw.org/resource/lte-vs-op-ed/>

**Pennsylvania Schools Owe it to Students to Accurately Report Harassment Data**

Schools are back in session and everyone is in the routine. One aspect many parents may not be prepared for is harassment and bullying in their child’s school. Knowing how each school handles these issues is crucial to each child’s well-being and ability to learn in a safe environment.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released their [Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for 2013–14](http://ocrdata.ed.gov/DataInfo1314) on harassment and bullying in America’s public schools. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) analysis of the data showed that 66 percent of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in Pennsylvania reported zero instances of harassment and bullying based on sex in 2013-14 — something that AAUW [research](http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/Crossing-the-Line-Sexual-Harassment-at-School.pdf) shows is virtually impossible. We believe the high rate of zeros points to very real problems in LEAs reporting systems. And, if such incidents are not reported, they are likely not being addressed.

The members of AAUW PA took immediate action, sending a letter to the governor that encourages our state to review and correct this erroneous reporting. As Pennsylvanians, we must be committed to our students’ civil rights. We know that sexual harassment is part of everyday life in many schools. Awareness and action are the only ways we can improve school climate. Accurate reporting is necessary to ensure schools are a safe place for all students to learn.

At this writing, we have not received a response from Governor Wolf. We look forward to working with our state officials to fix the numbers reported in the CRDC and we remain committed to improving the climate in our schools. This means providing training for school administrators, resources for students, and ensuring all can come forward when they experience harassment. Our students’ safety and access to education are on the line.