



Public Policy Advocate for Equity Award



For those that work in the public policy arena advocating for equity in education, particularly for women and girls, there is no name more familiar than Lisa Maatz. Her work to promote equity and justice for women and girls has been her passion since she herself was a girl. At eight years old, in an effort to ensure privacy in the girls' bathroom for herself and her female classmates, she created a petition and successfully collected 200 signatures supporting her cause. In seven days' time, Ms. Maatz had secured stall doors for each girl's restroom in her elementary school. She reflects upon this life-changing event in a chapter featured in the book *Secrets of Powerful Women: Leading Change for a New Generation*, stating, "I had first asked for the doors all by myself and got nothing. In fact, I got worse than nothing—I got dismissed, even disrespected. But when I handed my principal a petition signed by two hundred of my classmates, I had doors in a week. Just imagine how such a lesson could shape your sense of the world at age eight." That lesson served to motivate her to become the highly knowledgeable advocate speaking on behalf of women and girls who need their collective voice heard.

Many years later, Ms. Maatz became a legislative aide to U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and was introduced to the inner-workings of the political system. Drafting legislation for approval is a slow-moving process, but Ms. Maatz never wavered. "I've become what I call a pragmatic idealist. I work towards big goals incrementally, taking one strategic bite of the apple at a time and use the sweet taste of those victories to fuel the next fight." As American Association of University Women's (AAUW) top policy advisor, Ms. Maatz has become very familiar with advocating for women's rights. On behalf of females nationwide, Ms. Maatz and her colleagues at the AAUW committed themselves to establishing a seat for females at the White House table. Their efforts prompted President Obama to sign an executive order creating the White House Council on Women and Girls, which addresses critical issues facing women and their families.

Respected for her strategic approach to legislation and advocacy, Ms. Maatz works to advance priority issues of Capitol Hill, through the executive branch, and in coalition with other organizations, such as NAPE. Her work in partnership with NAPE has provided knowledge and access for our members and mentoring and guidance for our staff. Ms. Maatz's collaborative nature and accessible spirit makes her the perfect model for NAPE's first award in this category.