

Senator Barbara Boxer
Senate Foreign Relations Committee Business Meeting –Statement for the Record on
Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act
September 17, 2013

Chairman Menendez, Senator Corker – thank you for working with me to include the Malala Yousafzai (You-sof-zai) Scholarship Act on today’s business meeting agenda. I appreciate your leadership and support.

I introduced this legislation with Senator Landrieu in January after Taliban gunmen brutally shot 15-year old Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai in the head as she traveled to school.

Their goal was to silence Malala and to send a chilling message to others like her, but their cowardly act has had the opposite effect.

As many of you know, Malala recovered from her wounds, wrote a book that will be released next month, and bravely spoke before the United Nations General Assembly about the importance of girls’ education.

In that speech, Malala said “One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution.”

I could not agree more.

This bill pays tribute to Malala’s vision for her country by reinforcing the U.S. commitment to girl’s education in Pakistan.

Specifically, the bill codifies a planned expansion of the USAID-facilitated Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program in Pakistan to ensure that it supports as many female students as it does male students.

Shortly after Malala was shot, I reached out to USAID and found—to my dismay—that this program providing significantly more scholarships to male students than to female students.

In fact, of the 369 Merit and Needs-Based Scholarships that were awarded in 2011, only 81 were for women.

USAID has since agreed to provide at least 50 percent of these scholarships to women—and my legislation codifies that commitment.

This is something that USAID has already budgeted and planned for, so the Congressional Budget Office has confirmed that it will not result in any additional costs.

According to the United Nations, “Pakistan has the second largest number of children out of school [in the world]” and “nearly half of rural females have never been to school.”

I hope you will join with me to help reverse this terrible trend and support young girls like Malala who are bravely working to build a better future for their country.

Thank you.