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Dear Colleagues:

It is my great honor to join Superintendent Tom Torlakson in welcoming you to the 4th California STEM Symposium on behalf of the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (CCSWG). For more than 50 years, the 17 member Commission, an independent, nonpartisan state agency has advocated for equity and opportunity in education, and has worked in partnership to bring attention to some of the most important challenges confronting women and girls in our great state. As the initiator of the first CA STEM Symposium during my tenure as a CDE Deputy Superintendent, I am especially proud of the Commission's expanding collaboration with the California Department of Education and the Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation to focus on how to engage girls in California on the path to future discoveries as STEM learners and leaders.

I have served as Superintendent Torlakson's designee on the Commission for almost five years, and I recognized immediately how critical it was for the Commission to join with the CDE to focus special attention on pathways for California's young women and underserved communities. Late last year I was elected to serve as Chair, which has provided me the opportunity to continue to guide and support the Commission's leadership on STEM education and careers for women and girls. Some of you will remember when the Commission's previous Chair, Geena Davis joined us at the first Symposium and challenged all participants to remember every day: "If she can see it, she can be it."

This year we are thrilled to announce that the Commission and CDE are supporting the development of teacher training modules, as part of the Next Generation Science Frameworks rollouts, focused on ways to stimulate girls' interest in STEM education and keep them engaged. We are also planning a series of roundtables in regions across California with CDE and hope many of you will participate.

I also want to be sure that each attendee learns more about opportunities to join with the Commission, UC Davis and many other committed partners on Million Women Mentors -California www.mwm-ca.org. We are expanding this national mentoring initiative into California to create mentorship for girls and young women interested in STEM. We believe strongly that when students and young professionals have mentors and role models in both STEM education and STEM careers we see an enduring impact. Enjoy the Conference and let us know how we can further support you and your students.

With warmest regards,

Lupita Cortez Alcalá
Chair

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