

2018 Education and Health Policy Statement

EDUCATION

The purpose of education is to open the minds of young people to the world around them, to the lessons of the past, and the possibilities of the future. An understanding of the past is a part of education that is too often neglected. These important facts are even more powerful and useful when an understanding of their context and background are taught.

Technical education was underfunded or ignored for years and as a result, employers are now experiencing a shortage of skilled workers. We welcome the recent emphasis by high schools and community colleges on STEM, curricula emphasizing Science Technology Engineering and Math (sometimes written as STEAM, including Arts). We need to encourage those who fall outside the term “traditional student” to look at the educational opportunities offered by vocational, trade and technical schools or other nontraditional degree programs.

Many teachers and mental health counselors undertook their career education under the auspices of federal programs that offered student loan forgiveness if specific conditions were met. However, these programs have sometimes been administered in a capricious and uneven manner, leaving many who followed the rules in good faith with unexpected significant debt. We believe this is a situation that calls for reason and compassion on the part of the program administrators.

Since the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the 1946 George-Barden Act, focused federal aid for agricultural, industrial, and home economics training for high school students, our federal government has to some degree had a hand in funding public education. Thus, the funding of public education has become a partnership between federal and state/local, but we reaffirm the importance of state and local control.

Private providers of higher education are major recipients of federal financial aid and should be held accountable for their academic standards and advertised employment outcomes. We are opposed to any weakening of regulation of private education providers.

Many social problems in schools arise from bullying, feelings of disenfranchisement and isolation among at-risk students. We urge schools to find ways to increase the

availability of counseling for all students, and proactively engage with marginalized and at-risk young people. We strongly encourage Grange members nationwide to play an active role in their local school systems and communities. It is essential for our members to invest in our children's education through volunteering.

HEALTH

The opioid crisis continues to plague our country. A multi-pronged approach is needed and must include continued study of the benefits of opioid painkillers as compared to alternative pain management strategies; improved prescription strategies such as limiting the number of pills issued per renewal; proper security of our prescription drugs in our homes; and proper disposal of unused or outdated prescription medications through recognized drug take-back programs or disposal programs. These are all efforts that local Granges can and should promote in their communities. The Rx Abuse Leadership Initiative (RALI) has formed partnerships with various state Granges to address these issues and we strongly urge others to develop RALI programs in their states.

Biological therapies are significant new developments in the treatment of disease. We believe price competition and innovation in the development of biosimilars, the generic equivalent to biological therapies, should be encouraged.

Transglutaminates are additives that serve as food binders or glue and are used in many aspects of food production and preparation. These additives are a form of gluten and may trigger responses in the gluten-intolerant. Whenever used in foods intended for human consumption, transglutaminates should be clearly listed as an ingredient.

We support paid parental leave and working with businesses to build a comprehensive policy that benefits both the employee and employer.

Ambulance services can be in-network just as doctors or pharmacies, but when an ambulance is needed, one rarely has the time to find one in your network. We believe that all certified or licensed ambulance services should be treated as in-network by insurers.

We encourage bipartisan efforts by Congress to reform healthcare, identifying solutions that provide reasonable affordable healthcare for all Americans.