

VI. EDUCATION (Resolutions relating to education, including curricula, funding and school safety.)

A. Access to Education

WHEREAS, educational access is a right and should be accessible to all regardless of gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status and age; and

WHEREAS, schools and libraries are physically crumbling and programs in arts and music have been eliminated; and

WHEREAS, the disparity in conditions of school buildings, class size, teacher qualifications, technological equipment and programs, adequate libraries, and availability of art and music, science, and language education is very great all over the country; and

WHEREAS, the federal budget does not reflect these great needs.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Gray Panthers demand increases in the percentage of federal funding for public education at all levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers demand expanded educational opportunities especially for children in low-income families, and that these opportunities include appropriate classroom enrichment, and parent and grandparent education to support children's learning at home as well as in the classroom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that additional services are provided, including early childhood development programs, literacy and bilingual education, greater support for public libraries, and remedial programs; additionally appropriate technologies should be instituted, class sizes reduced, and library collections increased; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers supports efforts to increase funding for our nation's public schools.

B. Sex and Education

WHEREAS, the social environment is filled with many and diverse threats to health, especially those related to sexual activity; and

WHEREAS, the topic of sex education and the availability of sexuality-related information is under attack by those who would substitute "abstinence-only" viewpoints for balanced sex education, to the exclusion of scientifically based medical, health, and psychological information; and

WHEREAS, abstinence-only programs have been shown to be less effective than balanced sex education programs.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports comprehensive and scientifically-based sex education and health care education in public schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes attempts to impose religiously-based sex education curricula, in whole or in part, in public schools.

C. School Breakfast

WHEREAS, the federal government has a school breakfast program available for every school district in the country; and

WHEREAS, many school districts do not participate in this program and many children go without breakfast.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports a federal mandate providing for school breakfasts for every low-income child who is currently eligible for free or reduced-cost school lunches.

D. Public Education as a Right

WHEREAS, quality education is a right for all students, pre-school to high school, regardless of birth; and

WHEREAS, our public system is under siege from those who would violate and undermine the separation of state and church; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers' founder, Maggie Kuhn, was determined that social programs benefit all; and

WHEREAS, well educated students will be prepared for the jobs of the future knowing their rights, being capable of resolving conflicts by peaceful means, and being informed participants in the political process.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers hereby supports public money for public schools only and inform their elected officials as such.

E. Public Funds for Public Education

WHEREAS, legislatures across the nation are enacting legislation to enable people to receive tax dollar-funded vouchers to send their children to private and/or parochial schools; and

WHEREAS, the money used for vouchers would take money away from public education and channel funds into private and/or parochial schools; and

WHEREAS, this violates the spirit of separation of church and state.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes the use of public tax dollars to fund vouchers or voucher-like programs because it would decimate public schooling.

F. The *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT*

WHEREAS, the original 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) was designed to compensate for the great disparities of funding and achievement across and within the states; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress passed a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which set punitive conditions for receiving federal financial support based on a rigid system of standardized tests instead of acceptable learning theory, encouragement and incentives; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers agree with the NCLB goal to define high expectations so that each child realizes his/her potential; and

WHEREAS, the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements of the NCLB Act are flawed and have caused financial losses and closings of public schools; and

WHEREAS, the NCLB unfairly holds schools with greater concentrations of students with variations in capacities and resources, such as children from special education, poor, rural, urban and immigrant backgrounds, to the same progress norms; and

WHEREAS, NCLB radically reshapes public education in the language of business by adopting accountability standards and production targets of business.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers demand that the federal government adequately fund all federally mandated programs, including Title I special education mandates; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers challenge members of Congress and the President to amend the NCLB Act with meaningful changes that reflect acceptable child development, maturation and learning theory; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that poor districts whose tax bases cannot support the quality of education of richer districts be assisted to provide equal educational opportunities to all the nation's children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers urge Congress to keep its promise and fully fund the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

G. Financing of Higher Education

WHEREAS, education beyond the high school level is important to the economic and social well-being of individuals, families and society; and

WHEREAS, the costs of higher education have not been treated as a basic right, like elementary and secondary education, leaving much of the cost of college and other post-high school education to be paid by individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, the costs of post-high school education continue to rise faster than incomes; and

WHEREAS, the costs of post-high school education are borne unevenly, pressing hardest on those from straitened economic circumstances, leaving working class and middle class students alike unable to pursue the education and training they need; and

WHEREAS, given trends in the labor market, more and more education will be required to enter and thrive in the job market.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports extension of Pell Grants in number and size; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers call upon their Federal and State representatives to expand opportunities to obtain education and training, and that these expenditures be treated as a long-term investment in the economic and social well-being of the Nation and the States, which will be repaid in future taxes and other social contributions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers especially support higher education and training in fields related to health care, education and stewardship of the environment.