

HEALTH

- POLICY STATEMENT -

The New York State Grange takes an active role to raise awareness of problems in the health care field, especially the unique needs of the rural community. We, as an organization, actively work with other rural agencies and organizations to make everyone aware of these challenges, helping to find solutions, including telemedicine and telehealth.

Ever-rising health care costs mean that more people are unable to afford adequate health care for themselves and their families. Experience has shown that some government-sponsored and administered programs have help but have not been fully effective.

The Grange continues to work for a compromise on health care reform issues. We encourage the continuation of freedom to choose doctors and the facilities we wish to use. We are a strong advocate for rural areas so that their special needs are not neglected by those who shape our policies.

We must continue to be an active participant in all health care reform debates. Areas which continue to need our attention are the cost of prescription medications, the rising availability of counterfeit medication, long-term care and catastrophic illness insurance coverage, veterans' medical benefits, the protection of personal assets and financial savings to pay for long-term care and Medicare reforms.

Medicaid is another government program which consumes a large share of taxpayer money. Efforts must be made to contain the cost of the Medicaid program. More emphasis should be placed on preventive or "well-care" services.

Young people are our most valuable asset and the future of the Grange. We must support measures to protect the health and well-being of our country's youth.

We advocate increased awareness and education about suicide prevention, substance abuse and mental health issues at the community and state levels.

October 2019

CARE/TREATMENT OF MINORS

INFANT HEARING TESTING

We support legislation that would encourage the testing for hearing impairments in children from birth up to and including age three. (2019)

TYPE 1 DIABETES TESTING IN CHILDHOOD

We support legislation that would seek to ensure timely diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes by requiring the testing of any child who presents with two or more symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes, to increase awareness of T1D and to aid in decreasing the childhood diabetes mortality rate. (2018)

ELDER CARE

CAREGIVER, ADVISE, RECORD, ENABLE, (CARE) ACT

We support the passage of the Caregiver, Advise, Record and Enable (CARE) Act. (2015)

ELDERLY PHARMACEUTICAL INSURANCE COVERAGE (EPIC) PROGRAM

We support the continuance of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage Program (EPIC) to assist in keeping the cost of medicine reasonable for our Senior citizens. (2017)

EMERGENCY CARE/VOLUNTEERS

ENHANCED 911 FOR CELL PHONES

We support expediting the process of the Enhanced 911 locating system for calls made from cell phones. (2018)

FUNDING FOR MEDICAL HELICOPTERS

We support legislation that would provide annual funding for helicopter services as a part of New York State Rural Health Services. (2015)

LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEER INCENTIVE ACT

We support the Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act which would help local communities reverse the decline in the number of volunteers of firefighter and emergency services personnel. (2015)

SUPPORTING ACCURATE VIEWS OF EMERGENCY SERVICES (SAVES) ACT

We support legislation that would reclassify 9-1-1 call-takers and dispatchers from “Office and Administrative Support Occupations” to “Protective Service Occupations” in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Catalog. (2019)

FOOD/NUTRITION

BEVERAGE WARNING LABELS

We are opposed to legislation and the associated expense that would require warning labels on sugary beverages; as such warning is already being addressed nationally. (2015)

CAFFEINE LABELING

We urge passage of legislation requiring all food and beverage processors to list on the standardized nutrition label the amount of caffeine in their products. (2019)

EXPIRATION DATES ON FOOD

We support legislation that would have a uniform expiration date stamped, not coded, on all processed foods. (2015)

FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS IN FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

We support legislation that would direct the Department of Health to create a poster containing information on food allergies, including the eight most common allergy-causing foods, how kitchen staff and servers can prevent cross-contamination, and to call 911 if a customer has an allergic reaction and require food service establishments to display this poster in an area accessible to all employees involved in the preparation and service of food and that food service establishments be required to include allergen information on their physical and online menus or on a separate allergy menu. (2018)

FOOD SAFETY

We favor legislation that would establish one agency to oversee the American food supply, and that this agency should be provided with the resources needed to do its job. (2018)

HUMAN BREAST MILK BANKS

We support the continuation of strong regulatory oversight for human breast milk banks, which procure this milk for at-risk babies in hospital neonatal units, whose mothers cannot provide their own breast milk and we encourage more education materials be made available to mothers who may wish to donate their extra breast milk to regulated milk banks by local lactation support groups and the New York State Department of Health. (2017)

LOCALLY SUPPLIED FOODS

We support legislation that would establish a fresh fruit and vegetable program in schools encouraging the purchase of locally grown produce when available, through direct payments from the state to the school food services for the purchase of these products. (2015)

POULTRY AND FOOD PROCESSING OUT-OF-COUNTRY

We oppose any plan to ship poultry or any other food for processing to another country, when we have companies who can do the processing here under stricter health regulations. (2016)

FUNDING

EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR UPSTATE HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES

We support legislation which would reform the formulas for distribution of state health funding to hospitals and nursing homes making them equivalent to the current population percentage that lives in the upstate counties. (2018)

FACILITIES/FUNDING FOR TREATMENT/EDUCATION OF OPIOID DRUG USAGE

We urge the New York State Legislature to support bills that would increase funding for treatment and education facilities regarding opioid drugs; that some existing public facilities, that are no longer in use, be repurposed as treatment and education facilities; that funds acquired through opioid lawsuits be applied to opioid treatment and education programs in New York State. (2019)

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY

ENFORCEMENT OF HANDICAPPED (SPECIAL NEEDS) PARKING

We support increased police enforcement of existing laws and regulations for illegal uses of handicapped/special needs parking permits. (2015)

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND HOTELS

We support legislation that requires all newly-constructed and remodeled public buildings have all ground level exits made handicapped accessible to accommodate those people with physical disabilities to get out safely and efficiently. (2015)

We recommend that all public and professional buildings be equipped with handicap toilets and assistance hand rails in their restrooms and that code laws be enforced. (2015)

HEALTH CARE WORKERS/PRACTITIONERS

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We support legislative action that sets up a cross reference file between all counties and all states, making criminal background information accessible over a larger area which would allow a more accurate background check. (2016)

EXPANSION OF “THE DOCTORS ACROSS NEW YORK” PROGRAM

We support legislation that would allow the Commissioner of Health to include dentist in the “Doctors Across New York” Program to provide dental services to underserved areas of the state and would extend the duration of the program. (2019)

NEW YORK STATE LICENSED ACUPUNCTURISTS

We support insurance parity for licensed Acupuncturists. (2015)

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

We are opposed to legislation that would negate the need of physician collaborative agreement for Nurse Practitioners in the regular scope of practice. (2018)

NURSE-TO-PATIENT RATIOS

We request that legislation be adopted, to safeguard nurse and patient health and safety that would require:

1. Hospitals to have a nurse driven staffing committee which creates staffing plans that reflect the needs of the patient population and match the skills and experience of the staff;
2. Facilities to disclose staffing levels to the public and/or a regulatory body (2015)

NURSING SHORTAGE CORRECTION ACT

We urge the New York State Legislature to reconsider the Nursing Shortage Correction Act as the shortage of nursing programs has become very acute in New York State. (2018)

REGULATORY BURDEN ON HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

We ask Congress and the President's administration to take immediate action to reduce regulatory burdens and duplication to enhance care coordination by allowing providers to focus on patients instead of paperwork. (2018)

SHORTAGE OF RURAL PHYSICIANS

We support legislation that would establish incentives, such as loan forgiveness that would encourage doctors/physicians and other health care professionals to establish practices in rural areas. (2018)

TELEMEDICINE/TELEHEALTH

We support elimination of regulatory and statutory impediments to broaden the use of telemedicine and telehealth and institute a more uniform approach for reimbursement and that defined scopes of practice for practitioners need to be reassessed from the perspective of maximizing available resources to meet community needs. (2017)

We support legislation that would create the "New York State Telehealth/Telemedicine Act" to amend the public health law, in relation to promoting the development, provision and accessibility of Telehealth/Telemedicine services in New York State; and to amend the state finance law, in relation to establishing a New York State Telehealth/Telemedicine development and research grant fund. (2018)

INSURANCE/HMO's

AMBULANCE SERVICE

We support the current General Municipal Law 209B which approves reimbursement when an ambulance is called and Advanced Life Support is required (2018)

CHIROPRACTIC CARE AS COMPREHENSIVE CARE/COVERAGE

We support changes to New York State Insurance regulations that would include chiropractic services as part of an insured person's comprehensive health care service and to reimburse the insured or pay the provider for chiropractic services provided. (2018)

EYE EXAM COVERAGE

We support legislation that would require New York State No-Fault Insurance to include coverage for eye exams by an Optometrist, where needed, after an auto accident involving any head trauma or injury. (2017)

HEALTH CARE FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

We support legislation that would reverse the limitation on the use of Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts to purchase over-the-counter medications and puts an end to the “use-it-or-lose-it” nature of the accounts by allowing participants to “cash-out” their own unused money at the end of each calendar year. (2017)

HEALTH INSURANCE

We support legislation advocating lower premiums for supplemental health insurance. (2015)

We urge Health Insurance companies to lower the co-pays for follow-up doctor appointments. (2018)

HEALTH INSURANCE TAX CREDITS

We support proposed legislation that would provide a tax credit to qualified small employers, including farmers, when they purchase health insurance for their employees. (2019)

MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

We oppose any regulatory requirements that would make health insurance coverage mandatory for all businesses in New York State. (2016)

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESSIBILITY

We request the State and Federal regulators to ensure that insurance companies are abiding by parity laws already on the books to correct what remains an unequal health care system for patients with behavioral health conditions. (2018)

PATIENT’S BILL OF RIGHTS LEGISLATION

We support legislation regarding a Patients Bill of Rights which grants subscribers of HMO plans more avenues to challenge the decisions of their HMO when care is denied for a life-threatening illness. (2016)

PRESERVE LOCAL CONTROL OVER ACTIVE AND RETIREE INSURANCE BENEFITS

We oppose any State mandated restriction which would affect a local government’s control over the provision of health care benefits to its active or retired officers and employees. (2016)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER SERVICES

We support legislation that amends New York State Insurance Law, as it relates to insurance coverage for substance abuse disorder services, requiring insurance companies to provide at least ninety days of inpatient rehabilitation services to an insured upon a doctor's prescription. (2016)

MALPRACTICE

MALPRACTICE SUITS

We support the use of an experience rating system for determining rates for Medical Malpractice Insurance premiums. (2018)

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE FOR MILITARY DOCTORS

We urge legislators to override the 1950 Supreme Court ruling that prevents medical malpractice suits against military doctors with the exception of combat situations. (2019)

MEDICAL RECORDS

RELEASE OF MEDICAL RECORDS FOR TREATMENT

We urge the New York State Legislature modify Public Health Law 17 to remove language that requires a written request or authorization from a patient before a healthcare provider can release protected health information to another health care provider for purposes of continuing treatment. (2019)

MEDICARE/MEDICAID/HEALTH CARE COSTS

FRAUDULENT PRACTICES

We support legislation to curtail fraud in the health care industry. (2015)

We urge State and Federal agencies to be more aggressive in their investigation of fraud, waste and abuse within the Medicare and Medicaid systems. (2017)

HEALTH CARE COSTS

We support legislation that curbs spiraling health care costs. (2015)

HEARING AID COVERAGE

We support legislation which calls for a change in Medicare coverage to include hearing aids. (2017)

IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE MEDICATION

We support legislation that would eliminate the 36-month time limit for Medicare coverage for immunosuppressive medications for transplant recipients. (2019)

MEDICAID COSTS

We support legislation to limit the growth of all Medicaid costs. (2015)

MEDICAID COVERAGE OUT-OF-STATE

We support change in Medicaid regulations that would charge the home state of the legal residence of a person on Medicaid when he/she needs emergency medical attention in a state he/she is visiting. (2019)

MEDICARE DRUG SAVINGS

We support legislation, such as the Medicare Drug Savings Act, that would allow Medicare to negotiate with United States pharmaceutical companies to get the lowest rates on prescription drugs as long as the quality remains the same. (2019)

MEDICARE FOR EYEWEAR

We recommend eyewear be included in the Medicare coverage as needed. (2017)

MEDICARE FRAUD

We recommend increased efforts to combat Medicare fraud. (2015)

OBSERVATION STAYS

We support legislation that would require Medicare to accept the observation period to count toward the three-day inpatient stay requirement for a patient to receive care in a skilled nursing facility. Any patient, provided a room, attended by doctors and nurses, and given medical procedures including medications, be deemed an “admitted patient” to close the loophole in Medicare and prevent unneeded financial hardships. (2019)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

We support legislation that would amend section 365-h (4) of the Social Services Law establishing that the Commissioner of Health, where applicable, assumes responsibility for transportation of Medicaid recipients in rural counties; a public transportation system shall be prioritized for assignment where the system is available, appropriate, and the least expensive means. (2016)

ORGAN DONATION

ORGAN DONOR LIST

We support legislation that would ensure that New York's youth are being properly educated on what it means to be an organ donor so younger people can be informed on such a decision at an earlier age and would add human organ delivery vehicles to the list of authorized emergency vehicles in the state to ensure the safe and speedy transportation of life-saving organs to and from their destinations. (2016)

“PRESUMED CONSENT” TO HARVEST ORGANS

We oppose any legislation which automatically makes it illegal to harvest a deceased person's organs and/or tissue under “presumed consent”. (2015)

PRESCRIPTIONS/MEDICATIONS/TESTING

APPROVAL FOR GENERIC AND BIO-SIMILAR DRUGS

We support legislation that would allow generic and bio-similar drugs to receive approval faster and to have a free market for how products are priced. (2018)

COUNTERFEIT MEDICATIONS

We support all continued legal and legislative action necessary to eliminate the source of counterfeit medications and to pursue prosecution of those found responsible for the making and marketing of them, and also support increased efforts to educate the public on the dangers of obtaining medications from unreliable sources. (2016)

DRUG TESTING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY

We support legislation that persons receiving public assistance, prior to and randomly thereafter, be tested for drug use. (2017)

HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS

We support legislation that would require all herbal supplements to be verified to contain what they list on their product to ensure safety for the consumer. (2015)

MANDATORY MAIL ORDER DRUG LAW

We support legislation to clarify and strengthen provisions in current law to ensure that consumers have the option to access every covered medication for a local network participating pharmacy and are not forced into mandatory mail order. (2019)

MEDICATION IDENTIFICATION

We support the regulation of the packaging of prescription medications, so different strengths of the same type of medicine are recognizably different from each other. (2018)

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

We support the medicinal use of marijuana legislation that includes the following conditions: (1) the New York State Health Department register organizations or physicians to acquire, possess, manufacture, sell, deliver, transport and distribute marijuana for certified medical use for “a severe debilitating or life-threatening condition,” and (2) that legislation would not require public or private health plans to cover the costs of medical marijuana. (2018)

PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUG TESTING FOR PARTICIPANTS IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

We support legislation that would allow testing of students for performance enhancing drugs who are participating in school activities to detect illegal use, if there is reasonable suspicion. (201)

SCHEDULE II OPIOID ACCESS

We support legislation that would require patient counseling before issuing a prescription for Schedule II opioids; require practitioners to consult with the patient regarding the quantity of the opioid medication to be prescribed; the patient’s option to fill the prescription in a lesser quantity; to inform the patient of the risks associated with opiate addiction and document the reasons for the prescriptions. (2019)

SUPERVISED INJECTION FACILITIES

We oppose any supervised injection facility for the use of illegal drugs (2016)

PROSTHETICS

HEARING AIDS, EYEGLASSES AND PROSTHETIC DEVICES

We favor revision of the New York State Insurance Laws to allow replacement of hearing aids, eyeglasses, and prosthetic devices without regard to depreciation scale, and that replacement of the hearing aids, eyeglasses, and prosthetic devices be made as soon as possible after a claim is made and prior to a formal settlement. (2016)

PROSTHETIC PARITY

We urge the United States Congress to pass legislation which will provide amputees with the same amount of coverage as Medicare, which covers 80% of the cost for a prosthesis. (2015)

PUBLIC SAFETY

PLASTICS IDENTIFICATION

We support legislation that would ban the use of Bisphenol A (BPA) in all plastics and would require manufacturers to code their products and label products BPA free, if appropriate, and that more effort needs to be made to educate the consumer on the risk factors of BPA and the code number system on plastic containers. (2018)

PUBLIC WATER ON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

We support the State granting financial assistance to aid the county fairs in assuring that water, for human consumption, meets standards of connections with public water or chlorinating systems if New York State and/or the county health department require it. (2019)

REFORM

HEALTH CARE REFORM

We urge that any health care reform legislation includes measures that will address the special needs of rural areas, such as the shortage of doctors, adequate health care facilities and meaningful changes to make health care and prescription drugs affordable and available to all. (2017)

RESEARCH/PROGRAMS

DEMENTIA/ALZHEIMER'S DRUG RESEARCH

We support legislation that would approve market exclusivity for orally administered medicines that can slow the progression of dementia and Alzheimer's, to ensure that this critical challenge receives the pharmaceutical industry's attention that it needs. (2015)

HUMAN CLONING

We oppose human cloning. (2016)

LYME DISEASE

We support governmental efforts on the State and National level to fund research on the prevention and treatment of Lyme Disease and educate the public about its prevention, detection and treatment. (2017)

We support changes in the insurance regulations so that health insurers would provide coverage for acute and long-term medical care for Lyme Disease and other tick-borne related pathogens. (2019)

We support legislation that authorizes the New York State Department of Health Tick-Borne Disease Institute to maintain funding in their annual budget of at least \$1 million in order to provide grants for organizations in New York to execute proper research, detection, education and outreach efforts to combat tick-borne illnesses. (2019)

TOXIC EXPOSURE RESEARCH ACT

We support legislation that would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to select a VA medical center to serve as the national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the biological children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of individuals exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces that are related to such exposure. (2015)

UMBILICAL CORD BLOOD BANK

We support the creation of a public umbilical cord blood banking program, overseen by the Department of Health, to increase public awareness of the potential benefits of public umbilical cord blood banking, to promote research into the uses of umbilical cord blood and to facilitate pre-delivery arrangements for public banking of umbilical cord blood donations. (2019)

WEST NILE VIRUS

We urge the New York State Department of Health to redirect their research to include the possible effects on the environment and humans when using the spraying of pesticides as a way to control the mosquitoes and the spread of the West Nile Virus. (2015)

YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

We support legislation to expand suicide prevention education and resources to schools, service organizations, and state agencies. (2019)

TREATMENT

TREATMENT FOR EATING DISORDERS

We support legislation that would require insurance companies to provide full coverage for all aspects of treatment for all eating disorder. (2019)

TREATMENT OF GAMBLING PROBLEMS

We support legislation authorizing the use of a portion of all gambling generated revenues to fund expanded programs for the prevention, education and treatment of gambling problems. (2018)

VETERANS

FAMILY HEALTH INSURANCE

We support legislation that would change the laws for health coverage for veterans with service-connected disabilities and their families, to include their spouse and children. (2019)

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) PROGRAM

We support legislation that would allow the River Hospital in Alexandria Bay, NY to continue treating soldiers having PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) and not require soldiers to receive their PTSD treatment on a military base. (2015)

PRIORITY GROUP 6 FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE

We support legislation to amend Title 38 to give the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) the authority to enroll WWII veterans in "Priority Group 6" for the purpose of receiving VA health care services. (2018)

SERVICE-CONNECTED COMPENSATION FOR TINNITUS

We support legislation that would allow for a separate 10% disability rating for each ear in veterans experiencing tinnitus in each ear. (2017)

SERVICE-RELATED INFORMATION ON HEALTH ADMISSION FORMS

We support legislation that requires hospitals and physicians to include information regarding the military service of patients or persons close to patients on admission forms, including where and when the person served, what their job description was, and are they currently registered with the Veterans Administration and/or receiving benefits from the Veterans Administration to aid/expedite the treatment of any service related illnesses. (2018)

TRICARE CO-PAY INCREASES

We support legislation that would keep TRICARE co-pays at their current level. (2016)

TRICARE FOR RESERVE COMPONENTS AND DEPENDENTS

We urge Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense (DOD) in providing permanent TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents. (2018)

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA) HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT

We oppose any legislation that would dis-enroll any veteran who is currently receiving health care coverage through the Veterans Administration (VA) Health Care System. (2016)