

Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent organization for girls, with nearly 3 million members in the United States and its territories and more than 90 countries around the globe. Our mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Today, Girl Scouts provides girls and families with a clear road map for success that focuses on four pillars: STEM education, the outdoors, life skills, and entrepreneurship.

At Girl Scouts, we are constantly thinking about the future and how to help the next generation of female business owners, teachers, scientists, and community leaders succeed. Public policies are needed to support programs and initiatives that allow girls to grow up healthy and strong, develop the skills they need to excel in the ever-changing workforce, and make a positive impact in their communities and on their world. In our effort to build tomorrow's leaders, Girl Scouts is prioritizing the following public policy goals in 2017:

## **Promote Economic Opportunities for Girls**

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### ***Increase girls' involvement in STEM***

Studies show that girls lose interest in math and science during middle school- and STEM interest for girls is low compared to boys. If the United States is to maintain its competitive advantage in the global economy, we need to make sure that our young people—especially girls—can reach for careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). That is why Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring that every girl has the opportunity to explore and build an interest and possible career path in STEM-related fields.

#### ***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Promote proven techniques for engaging girls in STEM, including single-gender learning environments and hands-on, inquiry-based learning.***
- ***Expose girls to diverse role models and mentors.***
- ***Expand out-of-school STEM programming to girls and underrepresented minorities.***

### ***Strengthen financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills***

For over a century, financial literacy has been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience, with 23 percent of the 132 Girl Scout badges requiring financial empowerment skills. In addition to financial literacy badges, the Girl Scout Cookie Program is often girls' first introduction to business planning, teaching them five key financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. In 2017, as we celebrate 100 years of Girl Scouts selling cookies, Girl Scouts are embracing technology to innovate the most powerful girl-led business to reflect today's business realities through the national Digital Cookie™ sales platform. The national Digital Cookie sales platform includes goal setting and the development of decision-making skills as well as direct customer engagement and marketing.

#### ***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Ensure that all girls have financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.***
- ***Bolster the role of youth-serving organizations in providing real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial experiences in an all-girl environment that develops girls' confidence in managing financial decisions.***
- ***Leverage educational technology to strengthen financial literacy capabilities for youth.***

## **Encourage Healthy Living Opportunities for Girls**

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### ***Increase access to outdoor activities***

One of the fundamental pillars of Girl Scouts is an appreciation for nature and exposure to the great outdoors. Activities like hiking, camping, and orienteering build important skills that teach valuable life lessons, such as self-reliance, leadership,

and perseverance. That is why for over a century, outdoor experiences have been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience, and our Movement remains committed to ensuring that girls have the opportunity to take part in everything our camps and our nation's natural resources have to offer. The Girl Scout Research Institute's *More Than S'mores* (2013) report found that girls with more frequent and longer-in-duration outdoor experiences are more likely than their peers with less outdoor exposure to seek challenges, and are better problem solvers—both of which are traits needed for twenty-first century leadership.

***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Ensure that all girls get outdoors regularly and in varied ways, particularly underserved girls who may have limited opportunities to experience nature.***
- ***Provide opportunities for girls to explore solutions to environmental issues and develop an increased understanding of the natural sciences, natural resource management, and STEM careers.***

***Prevent bullying/relational aggression and build healthy relationships***

According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, about 30 percent of girls have experienced some form of bullying or relational aggression from their peers. Girls who are targeted have higher rates of depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide. To address this issue, Girl Scouts gives girls the skills to develop healthy relationships and prevent bullying behavior outright. Our evidence-based BFF (Be a Friend First) bullying prevention program, designed for middle-school girls, focuses directly on reducing bullying, including cyberbullying and relational aggression.

***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Engage local education agencies in providing education and training programs for middle-school (and younger) youth to reduce relational aggression, bullying, and adolescent violence, and creating safe schools and communities.***

***Foster Global Citizenship and a Global Voice for Girls***

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Girl Scouts is dedicated to ensuring that girls have opportunities to develop increased awareness of the larger world and to understand their relationship to it—even if they don't travel beyond their own community—so they can develop into responsible global citizens. Girl Scouts strives to promote cross-cultural learning opportunities and educate girls on relevant global issues that inspire them to take action.

***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Promote education about global issues, particularly those affecting girls and women, and ultimately, promote a sense of global citizenship.***
- ***Promote global access to education for girls.***
- ***Provide cross-cultural opportunities for international travel.***

***Support a Strong Nonprofit Community That Encourages the Girl Scout Experience***

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Girl Scouts is proud to partner with organizations and coalitions in the nonprofit sector to ensure that nonprofits not only survive but flourish as employers who provide essential services. We support policies that help nonprofits screen, recruit, and retain staff and volunteers, as well as incentivize charitable giving. Girl Scouts is also committed to supporting policies that help us deliver on our mission and increase our capacity to serve girls. To that end, we educate policymakers on the value of having a strong nonprofit sector.

***Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:***

- ***Ensure a healthy, effective, and vibrant nonprofit community to sustain the nation's philanthropic tradition.***
- ***Maintain the financial stability of the Girl Scout Movement to ensure that the Girl Scout Leadership Experience can be offered to an increasing number of girls.***