

Opening doors

The path to a better future usually means seeking a better job. A job in a high growth field such as health care means an even better likelihood of finding employment.

A program funded by a state grant at Mercy College of Ohio provides the tools and the funds many students need to seek those better jobs. That training will provide future paramedics, community health workers, and ophthalmic assistants among other job preparation.

This program aims to give students a certificate or proof of training to pursue various health-care jobs. Flexibility and financial aid is key to the program — the program will help individuals from underserved communities pursue a career path in a burgeoning field.

The programs can be completed in a few semesters rather than requiring a four year degree. Up to 80 percent of tuition costs will be covered by a ChooseOhio First grant from the Ohio Department of Education.

Not everyone needs a four-year college degree and the debt which often comes with that piece of paper. What many folks need is a path to a better paying job that they can manage while they hold down a current job and/or family responsibilities.

bilities.

Trained workers in various health fields remain in high demand, and the demand is projected to grow through at least the next decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That growth will create 2.4 million jobs through 2029. Since one of the main drivers of that growth is an aging population, it's likely those trends will continue far beyond 2029.

Another driver of that growth is access to health insurance. Millions of people without coverage in the past have been able to obtain coverage through the Affordable Care Act. More people being able to afford to get treatment for their ailments adds up to jobs in health care.

Targeting state grants for health-care education to underserved people who might not be able to afford training or might not have time for a regular class schedule over two to four years is a great idea. The program at Mercy College of Ohio should be emulated by other institutions.

The program provides a path towards a better job and higher income. It also provides much-needed employees to care for patients in a variety of settings.

School lunch success story

When the coronavirus crisis closed classrooms a year ago, many anti-hunger advocates credited a swiftly approved waiver from the United States Agriculture Department for helping low-income families to weather the economic storm that followed.

The waiver allowed districts that provide school breakfasts and lunches to continue feeding children, even if those kids couldn't make it to school cafeterias for meals. Around the country, school meal operations quickly shifted gears and began distributing box lunches and breakfasts as grab-and-go meals that were a lifeline to many families.

A year into the crisis it is clear that families need that lifeline more than ever. Federal officials have extended the waiver several times, most recently through Sept. 30. The success of expanding the distribution of meals to hungry children combined with the ongoing economic impact of the pandemic should prompt federal officials to consider permanently overhauling the Child Nutrition Programs.

In Ohio, more than 850,000 children qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and schools distributed more than 1 million meals a day before the pandemic struck. When the virus emerged, it was necessary to close schools for safety. It was equally important to make sure the children who relied on school meals could still get the food they needed.

To manage, the USDA waived several of its rules about serving school lunch meals, allowing districts to take free meals out into the community and distribute them in coronavirus-safe venues, including at community centers and via drive-through pick-ups. The rule changes also allowed parents to collect meals for children and allowed for the pick up of multiple days' worth of meals at once.

Locally, families were able to pick up meals at school buildings, at Toledo-Area YMCA branches, and other locations. Toledo Public Schools used its fleet of buses — which weren't carrying students while schools were closed — to deliver meals to city neighborhoods.



Tyesha Jeffers helps distribute free lunches with milk to a family at Bowsher High School in March, 2020.

School officials quickly adapted their meal programs and embraced the creative delivery solutions. But while the USDA waived its rules for getting meals to hungry children, the federal government did not change its funding formula for local schools, creating budget problems for districts.

Packaging meals individually and delivering them off site is more costly than serving children from a school cafeteria kitchen, so many school districts report their school-meal programs operated at a loss this last year. Addressing this would require increasing the USDA per-meal reimbursement, which federal officials should consider doing.

Even if school meals are slightly more expensive and slightly more difficult to organize, this is still an essential service delivered efficiently and at a bargain. Imagine the price tag of creating, organizing, and funding a replacement program to distribute food to needy families.

Many Ohio families already relied on school meals to make sure their children could be fed each day before the virus arrived and many more have come to need them in the past year. The expanded school meal program is one of the pandemic success stories. The USDA should build on that success even after the pandemic ends.



READERS' FORUM

Help businesses, but not workers?

Monday's editorial cartoon suggests that people prefer to collect unemployment benefits rather than work in these days of the global pandemic.

This is a cynical and demeaning caricature of millions of American workers who are dealing with frightening and unprecedented financial times. And it grossly distorts governmental stimulus efforts that have kept our economy afloat.

There is no mention of the \$813 billion in forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans that have been distributed to small businesses across our country. Bailing out businesses is no more laudable than bailing out individuals.

Both are necessary. Enhanced unemployment benefits and PPP loans have kept our economy running, and we should be thankful for both.

Attacking individual workers for receiving aid while ignoring the fact that businesses that did the same simply reinforces unfair stereotypes.

There's no need for this.

STUART CUBBON
Toledo

Support voting rights

I am writing to urge Sens. Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman to make the For the People Act their top priority.

The For the People Act would strengthen our democracy by protecting the right to vote, removing

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the influence of big money in politics, and cleaning up corruption in Washington.

It would eliminate unnecessary barriers to voter registration and boost participation by setting standardized guidelines for absentee voting, requiring each state to have adequate periods of safe early voting, modernizing the voter-registration process, and providing states the funding and equipment they need to administer and protect our elections.

It would also work to eliminate partisan gerrymandering by either party.

Ohio's senators must support this vital and commonsense legislation.

THOMAS KIRKHAM
Central Toledo

Save the libraries

As a retired Washington Local Schools teacher and former Toledo Public School board member, I am dismayed and disappointed in the

Washington Local decision to abandon elementary school libraries and replace them with STEM labs.

There is value in a STEM lab, but a school library is a wonderful learning place for children to explore the written world of fiction and nonfiction. It's a place where they benefit from the weekly opportunity to choose their own reading, to develop their interests, and to discover new ideas.

The suggested alternative of a classroom library is limited by space, and the public library is only accessible to students that have a way to get there.

It's too bad Washington Local Schools is denying their elementary students the joy and excitement of walking into the school library and seeing among the stacks the endless possibilities of choosing the perfect book.

Washington Local Schools should find a way to keep their school libraries.

BRENDA FACEY
LaSalle, Mich

Due-process rights not partisan

An editorial from the Detroit News

A POLITICALLY diverse group in Congress has formed to root out sexual abuse by employees at universities. This bipartisan approach is needed when it comes to other Title IX policies, too.

Led by Michigan U.S. Reps. Elissa Slotkin, a Democrat, and Republicans Fred Upton and Lisa McClain, and Democratic Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, the legislation would require universities to submit certification each year to the U.S. Department of Education that asserts the institution's president and at least one member of the governing board have reviewed sexual-abuse investigations reported to the Title IX coordinator involving a school employee.

Title IX forbids sexual discrimination at schools receiving federal money. The law has become broadly interpreted over the years so that now university officials have become de facto sexual assault prosecutors and juries. More on that later.

The Accountability of Leaders in Education to Report Title IX Investigations Act had been previously introduced, and it's clearly important to Michigan lawmakers following the decades of abuse of female athletes by Michigan State University sports doctor Larry Nassar.

The fact Nassar was allowed to continue his job for so long, even as some staff were made aware of the abuse, brought to light huge holes in university accountability.

Lawmakers are right to demand more from these colleges that take federal dollars. Students should not have to fear abuse from their professors or other staff while they are getting their education. And if it happens, they deserve justice.

Such bipartisan solutions shouldn't stop with this bill, how-



In 2018, a survivor of Larry Nassar abuse holds a sign showing the years that he was reported to Michigan State University.

ever. Title IX provisions governing sexual misconduct investigations on campuses have become extremely politicized in the last decade, with federal guidance shifting with each administration.

President Biden now seeks to unravel carefully made rules under the Trump administration and former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who brought back much-needed due process for accused students in these campus tribunals.

Mr. Biden claims the rules make campuses unsafe for female students and wants to return the 2011 guidance he oversaw during the Obama administration, which stripped basic constitutional rights from students facing accusations.

In March, Mr. Biden issued an executive order requiring the Education Department to review the current rules, which carry the force of law since Ms. DeVos' team went through the formal rule-making process — taking years.

Undoing them and creating new

ones could similarly take years. Even though Mr. Biden promised he'd do this, it's an unwise move.

All students deserve a fair hearing, which the new framework helps ensure. The courts are firmly on the side of due process. Dozens of federal decisions in these matters have upheld the rights of accused students.

Plus, the constant back and forth of changing rules makes it difficult for universities to comply. It could cause confusion for students, too.

This would be a good time for Congress to step in and clarify what university responsibility is under Title IX. In cases of actual sexual assault, for instance, administrators should be turning investigations over to law enforcement rather than trying to facilitate justice on their own.

Constitutional rights should not be partisan. Lawmakers must provide some Title IX certainty. If they don't, the courts will keep demanding it.