



### TESTIMONY

House Committee on Public Education  
HB 130 Early Childhood Education  
March 24, 2009

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) wishes to register our support for **HB 130** relating to early childhood education. **HB 130** would provide school districts with weighted average daily attendance to move from half-day to full-day pre-k for eligible students. Classes with 22-to-1 pupil-teacher ratio and a paraprofessional would shift the student-to-staff ratio to 11-to-1 creating a much better learning environment. **HB 130** also requires that 20 percent of new pre-k funds be used to support community-based providers meeting state pre-k standards. This community partnership would expand services without additional infrastructure expense to growing school districts plus increase quality community connections.

Quality early education, according to Bush School of Government researchers and economists, is the most important investment we can make to improve high school graduation rates and college participation rates. Children who experienced a high-quality pre-k program ultimately were:

- 30% more likely to complete high school;
- 66% less likely to be retained;
- 41% less likely to be placed in special education;
- 33% less likely to be arrested by age 18;
- 41% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Other research, sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, documents the high returns that early childhood programs can pay in terms of subsequent educational attainment and in lower rates of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. This research also suggests that workers with more education are better positioned to adapt to changing demands in the workplace. The most successful early childhood programs appear to be those that cultivate both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and that engage families in stimulating learning at home.

The LWV-TX believes that **HB 130** would improve the quality of education and care provided to all children. Research clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between the education, experience, and the quality of teaching to the care children receive.

Our members across the state, through a process of study and consensus, have a position in support of legislation that addresses the needs of all Texas children and families for accessible, affordable and high quality early childhood programs.

**HB 130** will promote expansion and improve on programs in a system of community early education integration and collaboration simplifying a child's access to quality early education. Your support of **HB 130** is essential to education and the economic development of Texas. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to talk to you today.