

**Testimony: Early Childhood Education**  
**May 8, 2007**  
**House Committee on Public Education**

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) wishes to register our support for **SB 50** relating to early childhood education. **SB 50** provides a comprehensive, cooperative and interdisciplinary approach to improve all facets of child care, Pre-K and training of early childhood professionals. The specified Advisory Committee provides a fortuitous convergence of like-minded people. The committee includes: specialized talents, interests, government initiatives, vertical secondary and post-secondary system-wide interconnected involvement and funding.

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.

The LWV-TX believes that **SB 50** would improve the quality of education and care provided to all children. Research clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between the education, experience, and compensation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers and the quality of teaching and care the children receive. With the creation of the Texas Council on Early Care and Education Career Development, **SB 50** will evaluate the effectiveness of changes by measuring improvements and program quality using a common set of criteria. Those criteria will enhance cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of young children.

The ECE industry is the eighth largest employer in Texas. As noted by Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board (Feb. 2007), "A substantial body of research demonstrates that investments in education and training pay high rates of return both to individuals and to the society at large. That research also suggests that workers with more education are better positioned to adapt to changing demands in the workplace. Recent research, sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, has documented 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. 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."

This legislative proposal seeks to collapse barriers that prevent ECE educators from pursuing quality professional development through a diverse range of training opportunities. It creates a career path for professionals to pursue higher education degrees, increases the level of education and experience, and improves standards and accountability for licensing.

By expanding and professionalizing the early childhood education programs and training in a community context, the programs are more effective and children are more successful in school. **SB 50** will result in a system of service integration and collaboration that simplifies children's access to quality early education and teachers' access to professional training. Your support of **SB 50** is essential to education and the economic development of Texas.