



League of Women Voters of Texas

To: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Council (DFPS)
msc@dfps.state.tx.us

From: Marlene S. Lobberecht, M.S., CFCS, CFLE
LWV-TX Early Childhood Issue Chair

Re: Support for New Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers

Date: 7 July 2010

The League of Women Voters –Texas acknowledges the positive practice of review to find the *what* and *why* behind every agency proposition. We wish to commend the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) administration for conducting the current thorough review and public input process of the *Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers*.

As the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) continues the review, regarding the Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers as well as other child care settings, the League of Women Voters-Texas commends the Department for recommending standards closer to the national average. These standards directly affect the health, safety, well-being, and optimal development of Texas children while in care outside the home.

The League of Women Voters-Texas reviewed the proposed changes and wishes to **support** the Department in implementing them. Specifically, we **support** the following proposed changes which:

- Lower the child/caregiver ratios and group sizes for some ages;
- Mandate the director be on site 75 percent of operating hours or 30 hours/week;
- Encourage outdoor play and set limits on TV or computer time, and
- Revise standards to reflect the requirements of the state obesity prevention program.

We continue to be struck by the great disparity between Texas child/caregiver ratios and those of other states. Texas ratios and group sizes are higher than 45-47 states in all age categories except infant care. The new standards allow child care centers to have a two-year period to achieve compliance. Moreover, 75 percent of centers responding to the DFPS survey currently meet the proposed new standards.

The concern over cost is not more significant than the concern for the quality and safety of care that Texas children receive when caregivers are overburdened by unrealistic ratios and group sizes. Numerous studies emphasize the importance of low ratios and group sizes for quality care.

Creating the right conditions for early childhood development is more effective and less costly than addressing problems at a later age. Emerging research has expanded the benefit of quality child care to an economic development perspective. Child development is a foundation for community development and economic development, as capable children become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society. Strengthening *Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers* correlates to greater child success in school and the creation of a strong Texas workforce.

The League of Women Voters-Texas urges the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Council to support the recommendations proposed by the DFPS staff. Texas can afford to raise the bar for the 1.2 million children under age six whose lives are profoundly impacted by the care they receive outside the home.