



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Education  
In Support of S.240 An Act relative to universal pre-kindergarten access  
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues across the state, supports S. 240, An Act relative to universal pre-kindergarten access, and believes that the time for forward movement on the phased development of high quality, district-wide, full-day pre-school programs has come. This bill offers a thoughtful and comprehensive consideration of funding issues, criteria for quality programming, and support infrastructure. Given this comprehensive approach, there should be no further delay in initiating this grant program.

By including pre-school education in the regular funding stream of Chapter 70, the bill allows for pre-school expansion as a shared state and local responsibility. By offering funding through a grant program that prioritizes high-need communities, the state is able to control the amount of funding it will make available while also providing support that helps to address the learning gap between students in high-need communities and those in more economically advantaged communities. Eliminating the learning gap has long been a goal of the Education Reform Act of 1993. State efforts at realizing this goal must include provision of pre-school education.

The grant application process builds in high quality criteria for programs and staffing and also requires comprehensive services for children on-site or in conjunction with community providers. Similarly, plans must include community services for families to support children's learning and development. This use of a mixed delivery system allows for more comprehensive services and economizes on program expenses by utilizing existing community services.

The thoroughness of this bill is also evidenced through its accountability provision of supervision from teams at the Department of Early Education and Care and through local governing councils. It will encourage not only accountability, but also replication of successful programs.

In summary, this bill meets all of the positions that the League of Women Voters supports regarding pre-school education:

- It includes parent education and comprehensive services for students
- It is based on research for high quality early childhood education
- It demonstrates the importance of linking state and local community partnerships with effective early childhood education programs and services.<sup>1</sup>

We urge the committee to report this bill favorably. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Impact on Issues 2016-2018, League of Women Voters, pg. 82