



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Education
In Support of H.489/S.301 An Act Providing Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early
Education and Care to Promote Child Development and Well-Being and Support the Economy in
the Commonwealth (Common Start)**

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October 17, 2023

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 44 local Leagues across the state, supports H.489/S.301 An Act Providing Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care to Promote Child Development and Well-Being and Support the Economy in the Commonwealth (Common Start).

The Common Start bill offers a financial framework and bedrock funding that will make early childhood education and afterschool care affordable, while also supporting high quality care standards. Professional development grants for early childhood education providers and higher compensation will contribute to high quality services, making careers in early childhood education viable. Overall, the bill will be a win-win for children, families, providers, educators, and the Commonwealth.

We applaud the Massachusetts Fiscal Year 2024 budget that provides \$475 million for Commonwealth Cares for Children grants to early-education providers and \$10 million for a career pathways program for early educators. This is a tremendous and historic investment in early education and care. We also salute the Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission for their March 2022 report. We believe Common Start legislation would do much to implement the vision of the commission.

The League of Women Voters at both the state and national level have long been advocates for support for early care and early childhood education. The League believes that the first five years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. The League supports equal educational opportunity, not only for elementary, middle, and high school education, but also for the early years. The next step of Massachusetts' commitment to helping all students succeed should be support for access to early childhood education and care.

The League of Women Voters supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it. With the framework established in this legislation, a comprehensive structure to support affordable high quality early education and care is within reach.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts thanks you for your consideration. We urge the committee to report this bill favorably and in a timely manner.