



California Has Historic Opportunity to Make This a Big Year for Little Kids

By Joanne Leavitt, Program Director for Early Childhood Education for the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC)

The state Legislature recently proposed major investments in high-quality learning for the youngest low-income Californians, and the League of Women Voters recognizes this as a historic opportunity to have a profound impact. With more than 100,000 children cut from early childhood learning opportunities in recent years, now is the time to make a difference in the lives of California children and families.

The LWVC has prioritized the financing of education from early childhood through high school while maintaining the educational content and quality of all programs.

High-quality early learning opportunities can have an incredible impact on children from lower-income families. At just two years old, there's already a six-month gap in language proficiency between lower- and higher-income children. Improving the quality and availability of early learning for these children will help tackle the readiness gap that many children face when they start kindergarten, and will ensure a brighter future for students, their families, and for California as a whole.

California only serves half of eligible preschool-aged children, and just 6% of the state's most vulnerable infants and toddlers receive the high-quality care they need. Not only are many children not given a fair start, but their working parents are also left without childcare.

The League feels strongly that when advocating for children we must recognize the critical needs of families and consider the long-term consequences of not addressing these needs. Every \$1 invested in early learning yields \$7 in the form of lower grade retention, crime rates, and special education placement, as well as higher graduation rates and lifetime earnings.

We applaud Governor Brown's leadership on LCFF and his vision of equality in education. By investing in early learning, we can fulfill the promise of LCFF by tackling the opportunity gap before it starts.