



## The League of Women Voters of Delaware

### Supports Special Education Funding for Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> Graders

**The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports passage of HB 48 to provide supplemental funding for students with basic special educational needs in grades K - Three. This aligns with the League's position supporting access to a high-quality education for all students.**

**Proposed legislation (HB 48):** The bill would add a funding unit for students in grades K- 3 who are classified as in need of "basic special education," starting with the 2017-2018 school year. The number of students needed to create such a 'unit' would go down year by year until the 2020-2021 school year.

**Need for this legislation:** State funding is already in place for students with "intensive and complex" special education needs during these grades. But funding for children in the "basic special education" category doesn't begin until fourth grade.

The probable reason for excluding those early grades from this supplemental funding was that in years past, screening tools to identify children who could benefit from specialized intervention --but who were not severely disabled -- were ineffective. Such children could not be singled out; thus, there seemed no need for a specific funding unit for them.

However, over time, diagnostic methods have improved significantly, and it is now possible to pin point youngsters with mild delays or deficits. Supplementing what the Districts can do to intervene with these children in their early years will allow many of them to overcome their deficits and move into the mainstream.

Research funded by the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance (January 2010) found that of those students identified for services in Kindergarten or First Grade, 49% no longer needed services by third grade.<sup>1</sup> Students with the least severe deficits are the ones who can benefit in this way. As this demonstrates, intervention in these early years, requiring modest expenditures, makes good sense, not only leading to significant savings of tax dollars in the long run but also providing these youngsters the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patterns in the Identification of and Outcomes for Children and Youth with Disabilities. Final Report," Jose Blackorby, et al., **National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance** (January 2010), p. 4-17.