

Endorsement Decision – Seattle Prop 1A and 1B – Pre-K

While positions and studies of local, state and national Leagues of Women Voters support the importance of early learning and childcare for children from birth to 5, and while the Seattle-King County League (LWV-SKC) greatly appreciates the efforts and aspirations of the proponents of both Propositions 1A and 1B to address these issues, the LWV-SKC recommends a No vote to the Question: Should either of these measures be enacted into law?

Reasons to Vote “NO” on the First Question

The League believes that the responsibility for meeting the developmental and educational needs of children is shared between the family and society. Federal, state, and local governments and school districts should bear varying degrees of responsibility for ensuring the availability, accessibility and quality of early childhood programs. Local governments and school districts should take the lead in improving coordination of these programs in the community

Coordination between local governments and school districts is lacking in both 1A and 1B. The competing ballot measures reflect the lack of coordination and increase the difficulty for voters to make a definitive decision.

Proposition 1A directs the City to work with the existing providers of daycare and preschool for birth-to-five and to develop new certification process for programs/providers. It would also create a professional development plan and a higher salary for caregivers/teachers. It includes a goal to ensure that no family pays more than 10% of its income for daycare.

In contrast, Proposition 1B focuses first on administrative procedures to provide a particular curriculum to a few providers who will be selected to contract with the City. Proposition 1B would create an infrastructure for a pilot preschool program with teacher training and program/curriculum development/administration. It is more expansive in its need for funding and implementing and sets salaries of some administrators at more than \$100,000.

Both 1A and 1B rely on undefined grant funding and do not demonstrate or estimate the cost to the City if either is fully implemented. While proposal 1B has one solid source of funding through the levy, the City would need to find another \$20 million in grants to fully fund the 4-year pilot program.

Proposal 1A has only one immediate mandated expense, which is to set up the Workforce Board. That cost is estimated at approximately \$3 million, but is unfunded. Neither measure creates the stability that the League would desire nor do they include the number of children who would eventually participate.

Neither measure meets the standards set in the LWV-SKC’s position on early childhood programs, specifically: (1) that there be adequate, stable, and dependable funding; (2) include educating the public on the social and economic benefits of early learning; (3) promote family involvement; and (4) have community and corporate support.

The League recommends that the voters reject both proposals and encourage the proponents to start over and work together.

Reasons to support 1A over 1B if the voters say “yes” to the first question:

Both measures will use private providers for implementation of the program. A select few from among those that meet a certain criteria would contract with the City under Proposition 1B. Under Proposition 1A, the City is directed to work with the existing providers of daycare and preschool for birth-to-five and to develop new professional development requirements for programs/providers. It would also create a professional development plan and a higher salary for caregivers/teachers. It includes a goal to develop a plan to ensure that no family pays more than 10% of its income for daycare.

While both proposals seek to raise the pay of the workers who are predominantly women, Proposition 1A also seeks to raise the level of knowledge, training and wages of all childcare workers who are currently performing the work and highlights the need for available and quality daycare, something that League positions support.

Proposition 1A does not provide for direct funding, instead relies upon already existing funding or new grants, including the money from the Children and Families Levy passed by the voters in prior years. Proponents of 1B have not stated how these funds will be incorporated into their plan, but also rely on some funding coming from the Family and Education Levy.

Because Proposition 1A does not propose creating an entirely new infrastructure, it should be more readily absorbed into any regional or state effort to engage the issues of Early Childhood Education. Its structure is through existing providers and does not discriminate as to the types of providers, such as Montessori and Waldorf programs.

The League has strong positions in support of ethics in government and measures to ensure that public officials and employees and members of boards, commissions, and advisory committees perform their responsibilities in the public interest in accordance with the highest ethical standards and measures to increase citizen confidence in government.

We are concerned that one of the two leading consultants for Proposition 1B is a vice president of a company that operates for-profit preschools. This presents the appearance of a conflict of interest if this company or one of its partners is hired as the City moved forward to identify curriculum and management models.