



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DELAWARE

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**Testimony in Support of
Special Education Funding for Kindergarten-3rd Graders**

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The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports passage of HB 86 to provide supplemental funding for students with basic special education needs in grades K - Three. This aligns with the League's position supporting access to a high-quality education for all students.

As we know, supplemental funding for children in the "basic special education" category doesn't begin until fourth grade. The probable reason for excluding those early grades from such supplemental funding many years ago was probably because 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 special needs students identified for supplemental services in Kindergarten or First Grade, 49% no longer needed services by third grade.¹ Students with the least severe deficits were the ones who benefited the most, and that is the group HB 86 targets. This research took place some time ago, but the findings remain true.

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

¹ "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.