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**Testimony to the Joint Finance Committee Regarding the DHSS Budget
February 25, 2020**

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Delaware. Although we support most of the programs under the DHSS budget, I will address just two.

We have, and continue to, strongly support the DIMER/DIDER programs. We believe they are the best and most cost effective way in which Delaware can provide medical and dental education opportunities for its citizens. In addition, these programs offer infrastructure connections which are essential, though frequently unrecognized, elements of the medical provider and advanced medical education “system” in this state.

As shown in the first report of the Primary Care Collaborative, Delaware has a rapidly increasing shortage of primary care providers. Access to quality primary care is considered by most health care experts to be the most effective way to improve population health and to control the total cost of health care. We applaud the effort embodied in HS 1 for HB 257 to encourage primary care physicians to come to Delaware by creating a student loan repayment program focused on this very important segment of providers. Since this bill was the result of the collaboration of many players, we were surprised and extremely disappointed to see that the Governor’s budget reduced the State’s contribution to this proposed effort by half.

We continue to believe, as we testified a year ago, that the State should use the budget process as an essential part of the effort to increase the supply of Primary Care Providers in Delaware. One can certainly understand why medical students, burdened with huge student loans, choose more lucrative specialties. Using a student loan repayment program to attract more primary care providers to Delaware seems to us to be one very logical way to address our shortage. This shortage affects us as a state—the cost of care in the long term--and as individuals--difficulty in finding a primary care provider. The shortage won’t magically disappear. We urge you to include in the proposed budget the million dollars envisioned in HS 1 for HB 257.

Joann Hasse, Health Care Chair, League of Women Voters of Delaware