

Testimony given at a hearing of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women on October 22, 2014 at Holyoke Community College on behalf of the LWV of Amherst.

Good afternoon. My name is Cynthia Brubaker and I am Co-President of the LWV of Amherst, Mass. My Co-President Kathy Vorwerk is also here today.

Let me begin by thanking the Massachusetts Commission of the Status of Women for holding this hearing today and giving many of us an opportunity to express our concerns and hopes for your future work.

The League of Women Voters grew out of the suffrage movement and the struggle to get women the right to vote in 1920. Our organization has always placed the status of women at the top of our agenda. Many of our advocacy positions have centered on women's access to employment, to pay equity, to health services and to good day care for their children and more. Today I would like to address 3 issues of current concern and the League's desire to keep these issues on the front burner in our advocacy work.

The issues I want to address are Reproductive Choice, Domestic Violence and Pay Equity.

Our goal is to make certain that women have the freedom to make reproductive choices based on their own convictions and beliefs. We support an emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies, sex education in the schools and the community, access to family planning services, wide distribution about information about contraception, the treatment of abortion as a medical procedure to be determined by a woman and her physician, and public funding for birth control and abortions for the poor. Last year the LWV of Mass was part of an Amicus Brief to keep the buffer zone around women's health clinics so that women would not be harassed and threatened when they have made the difficult decision to have an a abortion. Because we believe that laws should permit the exercise of freedom of choice in keeping with diverse individual beliefs, we support laws that deal with abortion as a private matter between a woman and her doctor. We oppose laws and judicial rulings that would undermine the full protection of a woman's Constitutional right to reproductive choice.

The League of Women Voters of Mass. studied and took positions in the area of domestic violence. We have all read recent statistics that say that 1 on 4 women in the United States will be the recipient of some form of

domestic violence during her lifetime. Our goal is to prevent all forms of domestic violence. We believe there should be a statewide response to domestic violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary, adequately funded, involving all aspects of the criminal justice system, the medical community, the schools, social services and the private sector. We support access to shelters for victims of domestic violence along with traditional and long term housing, counseling, interpreters when needed, and job training. We also support programs for those who do the battering so that we halt this scourge in our society. And we need more public awareness about domestic violence so that this social ill does not ever get swept under the rug. Along with child abuse, we believe that violence in the home is something that can be stopped and must be addressed on an ongoing basis.

Last, the League has long been a supporter of making certain that women have an equal opportunity to get the jobs they want and when they are hired, they get paid equally and promoted in the same fashion as their male colleagues. The average woman now gets approximate 75 cents of every one dollar that a man makes in the labor force. We must keep working to bring women and men's salaries and access to promotions and advancement to an equal basis. Whether women "lean in" and focus on their career as suggested by one IT executive or choose to temporarily "drop out" as frequently happens when

women drop out of the job market for a few years to raise their children, their status in the labor force must be protected. Along with pay equity issues comes a host of programs that the League also supports....which range from affordable housing, day care, job training and education opportunities to help women who are reentering the job market. These must also be in place if we are to fully address this issue.

Thank you again for this opportunity and good luck and thank you for your work on behalf of the women in the Commonwealth.