



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114 · Tel: 617-523-2999 · Fax: 617-248-0881

Email: lwvma@lwvma.org · Website: www.lwvma.org

Testimony Submitted to the Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time

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By Diane Jeffery, President

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts applauds the Legislature for its concern for the young people of the Commonwealth in its decision to establish the Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time. The League wholeheartedly agrees with the vision of the Special Commission that children and youth are the cornerstone of a civil society. Working to encourage the civic engagement and leadership development of young people is vital to the future of our communities and our state and to the health of our democracy.

There are after school programs and activities in Massachusetts that offer young people avenues for participation in their community and for development of their leadership skills. In some of these programs, young people can work in groups with others, and in others young people can participate as individuals.

Often the issue is the lack of awareness and information about existing opportunities for after school programs and activities. How do people find out what is available for the young people they work with? How can leaders learn about programs they may be able to replicate in their community? How can young people get involved in a program if they are not part of an organized group?

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, a respected, non-partisan organization whose mission is to promote the informed and active participation of people in our democracy, has acted on this need to provide answers to these questions by creating the [Directory of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development Programs for Massachusetts Youth](#). This Directory is a unique resource. Each listing describes a program for after school time in brief, as well as all the necessary contact information and other details about eligibility and fees, if applicable.

The Directory is updated annually so that all information is current and accurate. New programs are always added as they come to our attention and fit the criteria for inclusion in the Directory. Though each program is different, each in some way provides young people with the tools and motivation to participate in the democratic process. Many of the programs listed in this directory could be used as models for other communities or for youth groups that are looking for ways to involve young people in civic education and to encourage citizen participation in government.

The Directory is available in print and online at <http://lwvma.org/mayouthdirectory.htm>. The League sends a copy of the Directory to every public and private school in Massachusetts, as well as to all the libraries.

The League of Women Voters understands that one of the goals of the Special Commission is to provide and disseminate information to people about the availability of after school programs. The League believes that its Directory can aid in fulfilling that goal.