Childcare Update/Restudy Proposal

Our childcare position was adopted in 1985 (copy attached). We are not sure whether this should be an update or a restudy. The study that the position was developed from is not available on the LWVOR website but surely things have changed since 1985.
The current pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated childcare issues and inequities.

Some statements from our current position that should be examined:

Quality child care needs to be available, accessible and affordable to all families for children of all ages and with differing needs.

This appears to be not true at this time. What is the status of childcare in Oregon now? What are the barriers to achieving this laudable goal?

B. Affordable child care should be available and accessible for children with differing needs and in various age groups.

A study in Washington County of childcare found:

Insufficient information: Many children are not participating in OST (out of school time) programs because their parents do not know about them, according to a survey.
High cost: The cost of preschool childcare ranges from $7,740 to $16,680, comparing unfavorably to $11,800 for a year at one of Oregon's public universities. After school and summer program costs range from free to over $800/month.
Inaccessibility and unavailability: Lack of transportation explains why many children are not participating in OST programs. Programs tend to be concentrated geographically, making them inaccessible to children outside those areas.
Mismatch between program and parent schedules: Accommodating parents' employment schedules matters when parents choose programs. Matching parents' obligations with child care options requires continuous juggling.
Insufficient diversity of program content: Some parents want programs to enhance their children's social skills. Some want more rigorous enrichment. Others want sports, arts, or practical skills training. They often cannot find these options.
Inadequate programming for specific populations: Elementary school students comprise the largest population served by OST programs in Washington County; high school students comprise the smallest, yet parents believe adolescents require structure. Waiting lists exist at programs regardless of age group.

2.The State of Oregon should:

a. Provide financial assistance for child care expenses to low-and middle-income families based on need. Such assistance could include tax credits for parents with a ceiling based on income.

Is adequate financial assistance available? Are there tax credits? Are there other ways of providing financial assistance? ERDC and Pre-school Promise are funded

by the State for early childhood. The SSA bill allows for funding of afterschool and summer programs but the high need for counselors and lower student/teacher ratios means there is a low probability the funds will be used for this purpose.

d. Encourage development of school-age child care programs.

This is a pretty weak endorsement of a very important part of childcare in the state. What is the access to after school and summer programs? How are they funded? What ways can these programs be financially supported? Is there cooperation with the schools for space, program and curriculum? Can there be exchange of information between out of school programs and schools to track outcomes?

Child care givers should be awarded recognition commensurate with their responsibilities. The State of Oregon should take a leadership role in elevating the professional status of child care givers and ensuring adequate compensation.

Has this happened?

"Childcare staff" would be a more professional designation. Should the state assure that childcare staff receive adequate training?

Should there be a modified license for private family childcare providers making it easier for them to become licensed and for the State adequate means to track all providers?

DEI Lens

Some DEI considerations:
Does the lack of affordable, quality childcare fall more heavily on some races and ethnicities?
Is there affordable, quality childcare available for differently-abled children?
Is there a difference in availability between rural and urban localities?
Are there out of school programs that are supportive of LGBTQ youth?

This is an issue that is of major concern for potential League members who are younger than our average demographic.

Who will help:
Katie Riley and Penney Hoodenpyle from the Washington County Unit are willing to help.

As a starting point, much research has been on childcare and out of school programs. Here is some of it: https://washingtoncountykids.org/audience/educators-program-providers/