The League of Women Voters of Dane County understands that the 2010 will be a challenging year for the city budget. However, we believe it is in the long term best financial interest of the city to avoid any cuts to the child care assistance (tuition reimbursement) program; the child care community resources program, which allocates funds to non-profits, including neighborhood centers; or the operating budget for the child care quality improvement program in the Office of Community Services.

In 2008, the League completed a study of child care in Dane County, and found that the services provided by the City of Madison child care staff are critically important. Madison’s unique recognition of the value of city investment in early childhood education puts the city in the forefront of enlightened economic development.

Research has shown that society gets a financial return of $3 to $17 for each $1 invested in quality early childhood programs. Children who receive high quality early child care are more likely to graduate from high school, hold better jobs, and avoid criminal behavior, compared to peers who did not participate in such a program.

We recognize that not all the economic benefits of the program accrue to the city tax levy, but they certainly benefit city residents in lower costs for city, school, county, and state programs such as police, special education, jails and welfare.

Please maintain the city’s commitment to this program by ensuring that the child care program in the Office of Community Services is exempted from the 6% cuts.