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## **PCSW Supports Equal Protection for Same-Sex Couples**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, March 6, 2009**

HARTFORD – The Connecticut General Assembly’s Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) today reaffirmed its support of protection for same-sex couples and urged passage of a bill that would affirm the State Supreme Court’s opinion that it is unconstitutional to deny lesbian and gay couples the right to marry in Connecticut.

In testimony before the Judiciary Committee in favor of Senate Bill 899, An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection under the Constitution of the State for Same Sex Couples, PCSW Executive Director Teresa C. Younger said the bill would codify the Court’s decision in *Kerrigan v. Commissioner of Public Health* into State law.

“Even though the institution of marriage itself has a long history, the rules governing civil marriage in our state have never been etched in stone,” said Younger. “Rather, they have evolved over time, in the direction of broader access, greater equality, and more respect for the privacy and individual choice essential to liberty. Under Connecticut law, married women are no longer deemed the property of their husbands, nor denied the right to own property or bring suit in their own names. People of all races can marry and can do so across racial lines. Alimony is available to both men and women, and joint custody of children after divorce is no longer an anomaly. Each of those changes was controversial in its time, but each was required to correct an injustice.”

The PCSW, which is statutorily mandated to study all matters concerning women across the span of their lives, urged members of the Judiciary Committee to extend statutorily the fundamental civil right of marriage to all Connecticut citizens. PCSW monitors and make recommendations on policies or practices that grant or withhold benefits to individuals based on gender, or that are grounded in and reinforce stereotyped notions of gender roles.

Saying that Connecticut has always been in the forefront of efforts to eliminate discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, Younger added: “Our adoption statutes permit homosexual individuals and same-sex partners of biological parents to adopt; our anti-discrimination statutes forbid discrimination on the basis of gender. Notwithstanding the dire predictions of opponents of equal marriage rights, this bill will not weaken marriage. Rather, the changes it will bring about will strengthen marriage by affirming its importance as an institution – an institution based on individual choice and consent.”