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**Written Testimony of
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Before the
 Select Committee on Aging
 Tuesday, March 3, 2009**

In Support of:**H.B. 5678, AA Providing Financial Assistance to Grandparent Caregivers**

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 5678, which would provide funding to the Department of Social Services (DSS) to increase financial assistance to grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Millions of older Americans have assumed responsibility to care for grandchildren and other related children whose parents are unable or unwilling to provide for them. Whether the need arises due to parental illness, incarceration, substance and alcohol abuse, child abuse or military service, grandparent and relative caregivers step in and become responsible for most of the basic needs of the children. These caretakers provide a critical safety net to six million children who might otherwise find themselves in the child welfare system. Many of these caregivers are elderly and in poor health, on limited income, and ill-equipped to handle the stresses associated with caring for children who may have social, emotional, health and educational issues.¹

Nationally, of grandparents raising grandchildren, 1.6 million are grandmothers and 896,000 are grandfathers.² Of this population, 1.4 million are in the labor force, and have median incomes of \$42,111.³ If parents of the grandchildren are not present, the median income dropped to \$31,405.⁴

In Connecticut, there are 39,797 children living in grandparent-headed households and another 12,406 children living in households heading by other relatives – totaling 52,203 children or

¹ National Council of State Legislators. 9/08 <<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/KinshipCare.htm>>.

² U.S. Census Bureau. 9/08 <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/users_guide/index.htm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

6.2% of all children in the state.⁵ Of the 18,898 grandparents who report that they are caring for their grandchildren, 16.5 live in poverty.⁶ This population is racially diverse with 2% Asian, 19% Hispanic, 29% African-American, and 47% white.⁷

Eligible grandparents and caretakers could receive benefits to care for these children - on average \$344 a month for one child from the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program, or \$746 to \$875 for one child from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) program.⁸ The DCF program provides **\$402 to \$531 more** than the TFA program to care for a similarly situated child. Increased payments from the DSS TFA program would provide equal assistance to all grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

⁵ AARP Foundation. *Connecticut GrandFacts*, October 2007. 9/08 <http://www.grandparentfactsheets.org/state_fact_sheets.cfm>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Office of Legislative Research Report. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, 2008-R-0048, January 31, 2008.